



Childhood Drinking Strongly Associated With Risky Underage Drinking in Early Adulthood

Results from a new study surveying more than 41,000 18- to 20-year-old males in the beginning of U.S. Marine Corps training confirm that childhood drinking (under age 18) is associated with subsequent risky¹ underage drinking in early adulthood (ages 18-20). Additionally, the earlier children start drinking, the more likely they are to become risky drinkers in early adulthood. Comparing the surveyed risky and non-risky drinkers,² those who began drinking at age 13 or younger were 5.5 times as likely to become risky drinkers. Those who began drinking between the ages of 14 and 15 were 4.7 times as likely to become risky drinkers, and those beginning between the ages of 16 and 17 were 2.3 times as likely. Participants were also more likely to become risky drinkers in early adulthood if they had, among various other factors, smoked, come from a rural or small hometown, received a higher education, grown up with household alcohol abuse or mental illness, and/or experienced childhood sexual or emotional abuse.

Selected Factors Associated With Risky Drinking		Increased Odds of Becoming Risky Drinker (vs. Non-risky Drinker)
Age of First Alcohol Use	≤ 13	5.5
	14-15	4.7
	16-17	2.3
	18-20	1
Tobacco Use	Current Smoker ≥ 2 packs/day	2.7
	Current Smoker < 2 packs/day	2.0
	Past Smoker	1.3
	Never Smoked	1

Source: Young, S. Y. N., Hansen, C. J., Gibson, R. L. and Ryan, M. A. K. (2006). Risky Alcohol Use, Age at Onset of Drinking, and Adverse Childhood Experiences in Young Men Entering the U.S. Marine Corps. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, Vol. 160, December 2006.

¹ Risky drinking was defined using 3 questions from the AUDIT-C (Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test), an alcohol screening procedure developed by the World Health Organization to identify individuals whose alcohol consumption has become hazardous or harmful to their health.

² Of the participants (N=41,482), 15% were classified as risky drinkers, 45% as non-risky drinkers and 40% as non-drinkers.

Prepared by TASC, Inc. TASC is an independent, not-for-profit agency that provides clinical case management and other services to men, women and adolescents with a variety of social and health-related needs. TASC serves approximately 30,000 clients in Illinois each year. For more information visit www.tasc.org.

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