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Underage Binge Drinkers Grab the Hard Stuff, Survey Finds

Only about one-third of teen booze binges involves beer



FRIDAY, June 13, 2014 (HealthDay News) -- Hard liquor, especially vodka, is chosen by nearly half of all underage binge drinkers in the United States, a new study finds.

Beer is used in less than one-third of binge-drinking episodes, according to the survey of teens and young adults, aged 13 to 20.

And most binge-drinking episodes involve a relatively small number of brands, the study found.

Researchers asked the survey respondents about their drinking habits in the past 30 days. They also asked specifically about binge drinking, defined as five or more drinks in a row for males and four or more drinks in a row for females.

"Each year, approximately 4,300 young people under 21 die as a result of alcohol use, and underage drinking costs an estimated \$24.6 billion," said study co-author David Jernigan, director of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

"This study underscores the need to redouble our efforts on the national, state and local levels to address youth alcohol access and consumption," he said in a Hopkins news release.

For the study, published online May 30 in the *Journal of Substance Use*, respondents were asked about their consumption of about 900 brands of alcohol within 16 different categories of alcoholic beverages.

The participants reported that they used hard liquor, or spirits, in nearly 44 percent of recent binge-drinking episodes. Vodka was used in nearly 27 percent of all binge episodes involving hard liquor and in nearly 12 percent of all binge episodes.

Brands mentioned most often by binge drinkers were: Bud Light (13.5 percent of all youth in the study); Jack Daniel's bourbons (7 percent); Smirnoff malt beverages (6.8 percent); Budweiser (6.5 percent); Coors Light (6.1 percent); and Smirnoff vodkas (5.6 percent).

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Of all the alcohol brands included in the survey, just 25 accounted for almost half of all binge reports, according to the U.S. National Institutes of Health-funded study. [W](#)

The study also found that binge drinking accounted for 67 percent of all youth alcohol consumption.

"Binge drinking accounts for most of the alcohol consumed by youth in the U.S., and is associated with a host of negative consequences, including drunk driving, sexual assaults and suicide," said study lead author Dr. Timothy Naimi, an associate professor at the Boston University School of Public Health.

"Identifying the types of alcohol and specific brands youth are choosing when they binge drink is important for the development of public health interventions designed to curtail this dangerous public health problem," he said in the news release.

More information

The U.S. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism has more about [underage drinking](#).

SOURCE: Johns Hopkins Medicine, news release, June 12, 2014

-- [Robert Preidt](#)

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