 Teens Drawn to Heavily Advertised Alcohol Brands: Study

TUESDAY, July 8, 2014 (HealthDay News) -- The brands of alcohol favored by underage drinkers are the same ones that are heavily advertised in magazines read by young people, a new study reveals.

The findings provide further evidence that alcohol ads can encourage young people to drink. They also show that the alcohol industry's voluntary advertising standards are inadequate, according to the authors of the study in the July issue of the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs.

"All of the ads in our study were in complete compliance with the industry's self-regulatory guidelines," lead researcher Craig Ross, of Virtual Media Resources in Natick, Mass., said in a journal news release.

Those voluntary standards say that alcohol ads should be restricted to magazines with fewer than 30 percent of readers who are younger than 21, according to the researchers.

The researchers looked at alcohol ads that ran in U.S. magazines in 2011, with a focus on ads for the top 25 alcohol brands consumed by underage drinkers. Those brands were advertised more heavily in magazines read by young people than 308 other alcohol brands that are less popular with underage drinkers, the investigators found.

Compared to the other brands, the most popular brands were five to nine times more likely to heavily expose 18- to 20-year-olds to their magazine ads, the findings showed.

"We can't speak to what advertisers' intentions are," study co-author David Jernigan, director of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, said in the news release. "But we can say there is clear evidence that 18- to 20-year-olds are the most heavily exposed to these ads."

And, Jernigan added, "That's concerning, because that age group is at high risk of alcohol abuse and negative consequences from drinking."
Parents need to be aware of this type of exposure and teach their children how to deal with it, Ross advised.

"Parents should take note that scientific evidence is growing that exposure to alcohol advertising promotes drinking initiation, and is likely to increase the frequency of consumption for kids already drinking," Ross said.

More information

The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more about underage drinking.

-- Robert Preidt

SOURCE: *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, news release, July 8, 2014

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