

Kids View Too Many TV Ads for Booze, Study Finds

Number of alcohol advertisements exceeds the industry's own voluntary guidelines, experts say

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THURSDAY, Nov. 7 (HealthDay News) -- Too many young Americans are watching television ads for beer, wine and other alcoholic drinks, a new study contends.

The number and frequency of such ads exceeds the industry's own voluntary standard, said researchers from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore.

Under that standard, which was adopted in 2003, alcohol companies agreed not to place any ads on TV programs when more than 30 percent of the audience was likely to be younger than 21.

If ads were curtailed to meet that standard, the "payoff in terms of reduced risk of underage drinking and harms related to it could be quite substantial," study author David Jernigan, director of the school's Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, said in a Hopkins news release.

In the study, Jernigan's team looked at 2010 data from 25 of the largest TV markets in the country. They found that nearly one in four alcohol ads on a sample of programs most popular with viewers aged 12-20 exceeded the alcohol industry's voluntary standard.

The percentage of alcohol ads that exceeded the voluntary standard was highest in Houston (31.5 percent), followed by Los Angeles (30 percent), Dallas (29.7 percent), Atlanta (27.6 percent) and Chicago (27.5 percent).

If this advertising were eliminated and not replaced, total youth exposure to alcohol ads on these programs would drop by as much as one-third, the researchers said

"Underage drinking harms teens, their families and their communities," CDC Director Dr. Tom Frieden added in the news release. "Exposing teens to alcohol advertising undermines what parents and other concerned adults are doing to raise healthy kids."

Another expert agreed that alcohol is a real threat to kids' health.

"Alcohol use amongst teenagers is prevalent, and continues to account for the third leading causing of death amongst teenagers," noted Dr. Scott Krakower, assistant unit chief of psychiatry

at Zucker Hillside Hospital in Glen Oaks, NY. "I have seen many youths place themselves at risk with excessive binge drinking, without realizing the serious consequences of what may occur."

Alcohol companies "should not be allowed to violate their voluntary standard, especially with programs geared to the underage population," he added. "Youth are more likely to model after these advertisements, which ultimately can result in serious implications."

Alcohol remains the most commonly used drug among young Americans and accounts for an estimated 4,700 deaths among underage youth in the United States each year. Studies show that exposure to alcohol marketing increases the risk that underage youth will begin drinking, and drink more if they do start drinking.

The study was published Nov. 7 in the CDC's journal *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

More information

The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration offers advice on how to [prevent underage drinking](#).

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