Chug! Chug! Chug! Why More Women Are Binge Drinking

By Alexandra Sifferlin | Jan. 10, 2013 | 32 Comments

A young woman, Allison, at her own birthday party in Henrietta, N.Y.

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According to the latest survey from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 14 million U.S. women binge drink about three times a month, downing about six beverages per binge. The survey defined binge drinking as consuming five or more drinks in one sitting for men and four or more for women.

It’s not unusual for young women ages 18 to 34, as well as high schoolers, to overindulge; 1 in 8 women and 1 in 5 high school girls report drinking to excess. But binge drinking accounts for about 23,000 deaths among women and girls in the U.S. each year.

(MORE: College Binge Drinking: How Bad Is the Problem Really?)

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ALCOHOL

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“The project began a conversation for me on things that I was guilty of, perhaps uncomfortable with, but would still do,” says Berg. “I think there is something inherent about the community [binge drinking] builds, and the way it lubricates an individuals’ social interactions. While I was doing the project, my social life changed because I wasn’t participating while I was taking photos, and it really made me separate from everyone else.”

According to the latest CDC report, women who binge-drink may be putting themselves at increased risk for breast cancer, sexually transmitted diseases, heart disease and unintended pregnancy. Pregnant women who binge-drink expose their unborn child to a high risk of fetal-alcohol spectrum disorders and sudden-infant-death syndrome.

In describing her work, Berg argues that the danger of binge drinking among women is that women’s bodies, which are typically smaller than men’s, cannot handle the same amounts of alcohol, so attempting to keep up can be dangerous. And when the worst does happen, she writes in her blog post about the project, there is a tendency to try to justify it:

After a night of excessive drinking sexual assault can be redefined as a ‘hook up.’ The loss of memory due to inebriation can proudly be termed ‘blacking out.’ Words like ‘apparently’ preface the stories told of the prior night. With this, women abdicate responsibility and give themselves permission to repeat the same behavior.

(MORE: Why College Binge Drinkers Are Happier, Have High Status)

Although the CDC report does not speculate why women are binge drinking, Dr. David Jernigan, director of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, says that female-friendly alcohol-marketing strategies that emerged 10 years ago — including flavored vodkas, alcopops, Smirnoff Ice, Barcardi Silver and Mike’s Hard Lemonade — may be playing a role.

“All of these were clearly oriented to women. The data showed these products were most popular among females of every age group and were most popular among young drinkers. Those of us involved in alcohol prevention called alcopops ‘beer with training wheels,’” says Jernigan. “Women traditionally drank less than men — and still do — but there has been a very intentional effort to increase it, and this has started exposing young women to products and marketing at high rates. The numbers are not surprising to us and are of great concern.”

(MORE: Study: Does Alcohol in Movies Drive Teens to Binge-Drink?)
The CDC researchers, however, are hopeful that the trend will reverse. "The good news is that the same scientifically proven strategies for communities and clinical settings that we know can prevent binge drinking in the overall population can also work to prevent binge drinking among women and girls," Dr. Robert Brewer of the alcohol program at CDC said in a statement.

Jernigan says tighter standards on alcohol marketing, higher alcohol taxes and reduced availability are some potential ways to decrease binge drinking. "There ought to be places the [alcohol] industry agrees not to advertise. They are very active in the digital space, and it's easy to gain access if you're underage. You might have to do some math to put in a birth date, but otherwise all you have to do to get in a website is click yes or no. It's not an effective deterrent," says Jernigan.

While the CDC researchers recognize that binge drinking is a problem for both genders, highlighting the growing problem among women may lead to more targeted strategies and put pressure on targeted marketing campaigns. "It is a big service that the CDC is now presenting alcohol abuse as a woman's issue. We only wish that it had come sooner, because the marketing is 10 years ahead of it," says Jernigan.

Alexandra Sifferlin  
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i thought this article would explore WHY women are binge drinking. we know they are, explain the reason.

I find it hard to trust the validity of these numbers. They define binge drinking as 4-5 drinks in a short time frame, yet they probably asked “how many did you have last night?” If I had 5 drinks over an 8 hour period, that would probably max me out around 0.03 BAC. If the definition of binge drinking is anything that causes 0.08 BAC (which is what they reference) then they are making a mountain out of a molehill. I’ve seen people drink 10 drinks in a day and still blow less than 0.08 (not that I’m advocating that).

Oh and I almost forgot! Lies, D@%$ Lies, and statistics! Numbers don’t lie, but people do.

It’s hard to describe that person, Allison, as a woman. Being a man or a woman is based on maturity and growth. Binge drinking doesn’t fall into that category. I drank a lot during my 20s and loved it. I stopped when I hit 30 realizing on my birthday that I was not a kid anymore and had to grow up. I went back to college and finally got my MBA at 41. Not sure if it was better to do that way or after HS but I got it. I wouldn’t worry too much about these kids drinking and they’re having fun and grow out of it.

A bunch of rich girls drinking at RIT... whoopdeedoo!

this photo comment appears to identify a real woman at a real event. Why would you want to humiliate a woman to support your essay? Even if she agreed to it, this is yellow journalism.

Luke 21:34-35....
34 “Watch out! Don’t let your hearts be dulled by carousing and drunkenness, and by the worries of this life. Don’t let that day catch you unaware, 35 like a trap. For that day will come upon everyone living on the earth.

Women have self-esteem issues.

Binge drinking women? This is a huge step forward in women’s rights and equality.

five drinks constitute a binge?i have to ask,where are these people from?idiots

legalize marijuana,problem solved
Not everyone likes to smoke pot.

true

5 drinks or more is considered to be bridge drinking for a male? Come on over the wekend and I'll show you what a problem looks like CNN

Folks like drinkin’. And thats news? Not to me sir,not to me.

An article about women binge drinking and the dangers to them. Where is the article about men binge drinking and the dangers to them. Or an article about both. Same place as stories about male and minority runaways, few and far in between. Sure, young women have in some ways have higher risks and consequences, and so good for the article. But would be nice if something about things people are or can do to help would be nice.

I'm reading this and the article on gun control and the article about a decrease in people who do not affiliate with a specific religion and I cannot help to feel that it is this loss of faith, morality, discipline and love that is the sad cause for these trends. I don't want to get into a debate about religion, but the lessons that one learns. Especially faith. People often lose the value of what faith does to a person's sense of esteem and self worth. If you are going to abandon religion, you have to learn to still inspire faith and unconditional love.
You don’t want to get in a debate about religion, and then proceed in a public forum to talk about religion and your opinion on it’s effects. It is absolutely possible for people to not be religious and have morality, discipline and love. Likewise it is absolutely possible for people who are religious to not hold to those same values. Instead of painting with a broad brush and putting people in to groups based on their beliefs, lets review them based on their intents and actions, and how about we simply address the problems to help these people and that is get involved with others in ways to reduce the risks on these actions. Problem: STD’s and pregnancy, help people have condoms available.

Problem: binge drinking and driving, give people safe ride home phone numbers. Problem: people taking other risky actions, have people that made that bad choice that go talk to people about what binge drinking did to them.

@Alexjander You’re kidding right? We need more religion?! (yikes...)

Seriously, the age limit of 21 coincides directly with a dramatic increase of binge drinking for both sexes of an entire generation. Personally, I drank far more when I was under 21 than anytime after 21... Why, because when you get a hold of it, you have to get drunk, its not going to be there in the morning. You can’t drink it socially in a bar. No it is in a friends basement, or off in the woods. When you get wrecked in the club or at the bar, the bouncers throw you out... at a party, you’re stuck, no one wants to attract the fuzz and get everyone cited with a ticket and ruin the party. This is another symptom of the previous generation enforcing laws that never applied to them and wondering why it isn’t working, denying the direct consequences... Its bad politics, but sadly the only cure is thinking, something that has gone anemic in that American political system.


Is "Chug! Chug! Chug!" really an appropriate title for something that kills more women than total homicides in the US? (Roughly 14,00 vs. 23,000).

Stay classy Time!

So maybe alcohol is a bigger problem than assault weapons?

Wait just a minute. Women are drinking more, so the companies should restrict advertising, and the government should raise taxes?

What is wrong with personal responsibility?

Legalize cannabis. Safer alternative to binge drinking. If you are going to consume drugs, it's probably the safer choice to alcohol.