

HealthDay

Teens Swayed by Alcohol Ads

Underage drinkers' preferences shaped by TV and magazine advertising, study finds

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Advertising strongly influences which brands of alcohol teens drink, a new study finds.

The study found that 13- to 20-year-olds are over five times more likely to drink brands advertised on national television and 36 percent more likely to drink brands advertised in national magazines, compared to brands that don't advertise in these media.

The results are from an online national survey conducted by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Boston University School of Public Health. More than 1,000 underage drinkers were asked which of nearly 900 alcohol brands available in the United States they had consumed in the past month. The survey was conducted between December 2011 and May 2012.

"Marketing exposure is increasingly recognized as an important factor in youth drinking, yet few studies have examined the relationship between overall advertising exposure and alcohol consumption at the brand level," lead co-author David Jernigan said in a Hopkins news release. Jernigan is director of the center and an associate professor of health, behavior and society at Hopkins.

"These findings indicate that youth are, in fact, consuming the same alcohol brands that they are most heavily exposed to via advertising," he said.

However, a representative of the Distilled Spirits Council, an industry group, took issue with the findings.

"According to the federal data, underage drinking is at historic lows, yet advertising and marketing are at all-time highs. This real-world data further supports the overwhelming body of research concluding that advertising does not cause someone to begin drinking alcohol or to drink more," said Lisa Hawkins, the group's vice president.

"Government research shows the vast majority of underage drinkers -- 91.3 percent -- do not purchase their own alcohol, but rather "obtain" it from parents and other legal-age adults," Hawkins added. "Therefore, this survey reflects the brand choices of the adults of legal purchase age and nothing more."

But study co-lead author Dr. Michael Siegel believes there is a real link between advertising and youth alcohol consumption. He noted that it used to be controversial to suggest a relationship between cigarette marketing and youth smoking -- until researchers showed the impact of the Joe Camel advertising campaign on kids.

"Once the relationship between cigarette ads and the brands that youth were smoking was established, significant policy shifts occurred as state and federal policy makers took the issue of

advertising exposure to youth much more seriously," Siegel, a professor of community health sciences at Boston University, said in the news release.

Alcohol is the most widely used drug among American youth. Alcohol advertising is primarily self-regulated by the industry, the study authors said.

The study was published online Oct. 20 in the *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*.

More information

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

SOURCES: Johns Hopkins University, news release, Oct. 20, 2015; statement, Lisa Hawkins, vice president for the Distilled Spirits Council, Oct. 20, 2015