



# Coffee Break Companion

“Learn what the latest research says about adolescent substance abuse in the time it takes to have your coffee break”



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## The Article

Title: Predictors of initiation of alcohol use among US adolescents

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## Introduction

Given the pervasive use of alcohol among adolescents, especially during high school, the researchers set out to determine factors that increased or decreased the likelihood that an adolescent would start drinking. Early alcohol use can lead to a multitude of different problems and so it is imperative to discover ways to prevent it.

## Participants

Data came from the Growing Up Today Study (GUTS). The GUTS started in 1996 and follow-up surveys are mailed annually. In 1998 and 1999, researchers added a more detailed section on alcohol consumption for the purposes of this study. This study excluded participants who reported no alcohol use in both 1998 and 1999. The final sample consisted of 3283 girls and 2228 girls who were 11-18 years old in 1998.

## Measures

Several measures from the GUTS were used for this study to determine individual and socio-demographic, family, and social context variables. Individual measures included level of maturity and development in puberty (Tanner stages), self-esteem, and cigarette smoking. For the purposes of this study, race was split into two groups, either white or non-white. Researchers asked the youth which adults they lived with most of the time and how frequently their families ate dinner together. In addition, participants also reported whether adults in the home drink alcohol and whether any siblings under 21 also drink. Researchers also assessed peer alcohol use, awareness of alcohol advertising, ownership of alcohol promotional items (APIs). An example of an API would be a hat or a t-shirt with an alcohol brand name on it. The researchers used the Alcohol Expectancy Questionnaire-Adolescent version (AEQ-A) to measure attitudes and beliefs about alcohol. Higher scores on this measure signified more positive attitudes and beliefs about drinking alcohol.

The main outcome was alcohol initiation, which adolescents reported on by answering various questions. First, the participants were asked if they had ever had a sip of alcohol and if they had ever had a whole “drink.” Researchers defined a whole drink as “a whole glass, can, or bottle of beer; a whole glass of wine; or a whole ‘mixed drink’ or shot of liquor,” (p. 961). Researchers assessed binge drinking and alcohol uptake based on the “Stages of Change Model” (Prochaska & DiClemente). Researchers defined the stages of alcohol uptake as precontemplators - not thinking about alcohol use, contemplators - starting to think about alcohol use, or experimenters - those who had tried alcohol but never had a whole drink.

## Results

The study found that 19% of girls and 17% of boys who were not drinkers in 1998 reported they had had a whole drink of alcohol on the 1999 survey. For both sexes, alcohol initiation related to age, greater physical maturity, smoking cigarettes, having adults and/or underage siblings drinking the home, peers drinking, owning or being willing to use APIs, and more favorable attitudes towards drinking alcohol. Self-esteem differed by sex with higher social self-esteem among girls and athletic self-esteem among boys being positively related to alcohol initiation. In addition, for girls, living in a single parent household positively related to alcohol initiation while eating more family dinners at home was negatively related to initiation.

For binge drinking, 5% of girls and 5% of boys who were never drinkers in 1998 reported binge drinking in 1999. More positive attitudes towards drinking related to more binge drinking. Older boys were more likely to binge drink as were girls who were willing to use APIs or had siblings who drank.



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