

No evidence that parents supplying alcohol to adolescents has a protective effect

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A new report by researchers at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC), UNSW Sydney found no evidence that parental supply of alcohol to adolescents has a protective effect to avoid later alcohol harms.

The report also found that parental supply of just 'sips' of alcohol is associated with increased risks of adverse alcohol outcomes relative to no supply.

Lead author, Alexandra Aiken said: "Whilst many parents may supply sips of alcohol to their [underage children](#) as a harm reduction strategy, results shows that supply of sips exists on a continuum of increasing risk of adverse outcomes."

Data were analysed from the Australian Parental Supply of Alcohol Longitudinal Study (APSALS) cohort of 1,910 adolescents and their parents, recruited in the first year of secondary school and followed up annually over seven years.

"Parental supply of sips in one year was associated with increased risk of binge drinking and alcohol-related harms a year later, compared

with no supply. As the quantity of alcohol supplied increased, so too did the risk of adverse outcomes," said Ms Aiken.

'Sipping' is the most common form of alcohol consumption among [children](#) and young adolescents, is usually supervised, and is associated with child perceptions of parental approval and familial modelling of alcohol behaviours.

"While parents supplying larger amounts of alcohol is associated with worse outcomes, even supplying relatively small quantities such as sips increases the risk of adverse outcomes for adolescents relative to no supply," said Ms Aiken.

"Relative to no parental supply, parental supply of even small amounts of alcohol in [early adolescence](#) may hasten alcohol initiation, may be perceived by children as permissiveness and approval, and may reduce barriers to alcohol use, all of which in turn might encourage further alcohol consumption."

Alcohol consumption is a leading contributor to the disease burden amongst adolescents and [young adults](#) and is linked to a range of acute negative health outcomes including the development of alcohol use disorder.

"We believe there is now a strong case for the development of a parent-based intervention focussed on reducing parental provision of [alcohol](#) to their children, including the provision of sips."

More information: Alexandra Aiken et al. Parental supply of sips and whole drinks of alcohol to adolescents and associations with binge drinking and alcohol-related harms: A prospective cohort study, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* (2020). DOI: [10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2020.108204](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2020.108204)

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