

# Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Risk for Heavy Drinking and Alcohol Use Disorder Is Age Specific

*Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* (April 2007) Vol 31, Is 4: 643-654.

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This research was supported by Grant AA11873 from the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Research was also supported in part by AA00202, AA08746, AA12342, AA0626, and grants from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (DA12414, DA05605, F31 DA017546), the National Institute on Mental Health (MH12010, MH4815, MH47390, MH45576, MH50467, MH53554), and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (ES0515-08).

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## Abstract

**Background:** This study was designed to assess age specificity in the risk for heavy drinking and alcohol use disorder (AUD) among adolescents and young adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) diagnosed in childhood.

**Method:** Children diagnosed with ADHD ( $n=364$  probands) were interviewed an average of 8 years later in the Pittsburgh ADHD Longitudinal Study, either as adolescents (11–17 years old) or as young adults (18–28 years of age). Demographically similar age-matched participants without ADHD were recruited as adolescents ( $n=120$ ) or as adults ( $n=120$ ) for comparison with the probands. Alcohol involvement was assessed comprehensively to include measures of heavy drinking that are standard in alcoholism research and prognostic of later alcohol-related problems.

**Results:** Results revealed age specificity in the association such that episodic heavy drinking (measured as 5+ drinks per occasion), drunkenness, DSM-IV AUD symptoms, and DSM-IV AUD were elevated among 15- to 17-year-old probands, but not among younger adolescents. Among young adults, drinking quantity and AUD were elevated among probands with antisocial personality disorder. Childhood predictors indexing antisocial behavior were also examined.

**Conclusions:** The age- specificity of these findings helps to explain prior inconsistencies across previous studies regarding risk for alcohol-related outcomes among children with ADHD.