Biomarker May Help Screen Young Adults for Binge Drinking

A biomarker found in the blood of alcohol users is significantly higher in binge drinkers than in those who consume alcohol moderately. The biomarker, phosphatidylethanol (PEth), could be used to screen young adults for harmful or heavy drinking, such as binge drinking.

Researchers measured PEth in blood samples from students at two large Midwestern university campuses. Participants were part of a larger ongoing study examining the cardiovascular effects of binge drinking. Participants completed a 10-question self-assessment survey to determine their drinking patterns. After questionnaires were reviewed, participants were divided into three groups: abstainers, moderate drinkers, and binge drinkers. Abstainers had not had more than one drink per month in the past 2 to 3 years. For men, moderate drinking was defined as consuming three drinks or less per sitting one to two times per week in the past 5 years. For women, the number of drinks was two. Binge drinkers must have had at least two episodes of heavy drinking in one sitting in the past month.

The majority of participants were Caucasian females. The majority of moderate and binge drinkers were Caucasian individuals, whereas abstainers were predominantly Asian individuals.

Following self-assessment, blood was drawn from each participant to measure blood alcohol levels and PEth. Five blood spots were placed on cards to be dried and measured against whole blood samples in an off-site drug testing laboratory. PEth levels in the blood positively correlated with self-assessment survey scores.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Therapy Yields Greater Improvement in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptom Severity

In a randomized trial that included Veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), those who received mindfulness-based stress reduction therapy showed greater improvement in self-reported PTSD symptom severity. Researchers randomly assigned 116 Veterans with PTSD to receive nine sessions of mindfulness-based stress reduction therapy (n = 58) or present-centered group therapy (n = 58), an active-control condition comprising nine weekly group sessions focused on current life problems. Outcomes were assessed before, during, and after treatment and at 2-month follow up.

Participants in the mindfulness-based stress reduction group demonstrated greater improvement in self-reported PTSD symptom severity during treatment and at 2-month follow up. Although participants in the mindfulness-based stress reduction group were more likely to show clinically significant improvement in order (PTSD), despite a significant decline in tobacco use by adults, as reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), smoking rates in individuals with poor mental health remained the same for a decade. In addition, during the 10-year period, smoking prevalence was greater in individuals with behavioral health conditions compared to those with better mental health.

New Jersey data examined in the study were obtained from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System provided by the New Jersey Department of Health. Data were collected from telephone surveys independently conducted in all 50 states that compiled chronic health information from adults 18 and older and then pooled by the CDC.

Smoking Rates Still the Same for Individuals With Poor Mental Health

Despite a significant decline in tobacco use by adults, as reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), smoking rates in individuals with poor mental health remained the same for a decade. In addition, during the 10-year period, smoking prevalence was greater in individuals with behavioral health conditions compared to those with better mental health.

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self-reported PTSD symptom severity (49% versus 28% with present-centered group therapy) at 2-month follow up, there was no difference in rates of loss of PTSD diagnosis at posttreatment (42% versus 44%) or at 2-month follow up (53% versus 47%).


When Picky Eating Becomes Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder

Avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID) is an eating or feeding disturbance that results in persistent failure to meet appropriate nutritional and energy needs. Many infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are labeled picky eaters, and parents assume or are told that it is a phase. However, if a child enters school and still displays a significant level of selective eating, it may be something to address.

If left untreated, children with ARFID could lose weight and become malnourished, and eating issues can interfere with activities of everyday life, such as eating dinner and socializing. A recent study found that children with severe selective eating disorder were more than twice as likely to be diagnosed with social anxiety or depression. A study of children admitted to a day program for children ages 8 to 16 with eating difficulties found that 23% had ARFID and many had higher rates of anxiety disorders.


National Institutes of Health Funding 5-Year Study to Evaluate Medical Treatment for Transgender Youth

The National Institutes of Health has awarded $5.7 million for a 5-year, multicenter study that will be the first in the United States to evaluate long-term outcomes of medical treatment for transgender youth. The study will provide essential, evidence-based information on the physiological and psychosocial impact, as well as safety, of hormone blockers and cross-sex hormone use in this population.

The study will include 280 transgender youth with gender dysphoria. Participants will be those who seek medical intervention to align their physical bodies with their gender identity and alleviate gender dysphoria and its associated negative effects, including anxiety, depression, and substance abuse. The study will include youth from two age groups: younger children in early puberty, who will receive hormone blockers; and older adolescents, who will begin use of masculinizing or feminizing cross-sex hormones.

For the cohort in the earliest stages of puberty, the study will evaluate the impact of treatment on mental health, psychological well-being, physiological parameters, and bone health, and will document the safety of hormone blockers. In the older group, the study will document the safety of administering cross-sex hormones for phenotypic gender transition, as well as evaluate its impact on mental health, psychological well-being, and certain metabolic/physiological parameters.


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Youth Benefit From Mental Health Provider and Family Doctor Team

Researchers studied a wide range of published research and found that children and adolescents who receive integrated mental health and medical treatment are 66% more likely to have a good outcome than those who receive more traditional primary care. Researchers combined the results of 31 studies that compared outcomes in an integrated model with those in a more conventional approach. Data covered outcomes for 13,129 children and adolescents.

The likelihood of a positive outcome increased the more directly primary care and mental health providers worked together. When a psychologist or social worker was embedded in a pediatrician’s or family doctor’s office and collaborated with the physician on treatment and follow up, the youth was 73% more likely to have a good outcome than in conventional primary care.