

PREDICTION OF PERICONCEPTIONAL ALCOHOL USE FROM ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG ADULTHOOD: A 20-YEAR PROSPECTIVE COHORT STUDY

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Introduction: Periconception spans the time preceding, including and immediately following conception. This period represents a critical window of exposure for offspring growth and development. Many women drink alcohol antenatally; less is known about drinking patterns pre-pregnancy awareness, or about prior patterns of use in adolescence and young adulthood that may predict periconceptional drinking. We examined the extent to which alcohol use and disorder preconception (in adolescence and young adulthood) predicted periconception drinking.

Method: Female participants (N=301) from the Victorian Intergenerational Health Cohort Study (VIHCS) reported on heavy binge drinking (≥ 11 drinks in a day) and alcohol use disorder from adolescence to young adulthood (nine waves across 14-29 years). In pregnancy (between 29-35 years) women were asked how frequently they consumed alcohol pre-pregnancy awareness.

Results: Most women reported drinking periconceptionally (77%); 18% drank frequently (3+ times a week). Frequent periconceptional drinking was common among women who reported persistent young adult heavy binge drinking (OR=7.6, 95%CI 3.1-19.0, $p < 0.001$) or alcohol use disorder (OR=12.2, 95%CI 5.2-28.8, $p < 0.001$). Importantly, though, 48% of frequent periconception drinkers reported no problematic preconception drinking from their mid-late 20s.

Discussions and Conclusions: Alcohol use is common among women in the periconception window. Women with a history of persistent heavy binge drinking or alcohol use disorder preconception are at increased risk for periconceptional drinking. Notably, however, much frequent periconceptional drinking occurs among women with normative drinking patterns preconception. Public health initiatives for periconception alcohol use should be widely disseminated and targeted earlier in the preconception window (i.e., the mid-20s).