

WHY PARENTS SUPPLY OF A SIP IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE: BAD PARENTING OR PROTECTING THEIR CHILD?

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Introduction: Parental supply of alcohol is common, with parents often initiating adolescent use with sips. Despite known harms of adolescent alcohol use, why parents supply alcohol, and initiate use, has not been addressed by research. This study investigated what familial, parental, peer and behavioural factors predicted parents supplying sips of alcohol to their early adolescent children.

Method: Participants were 1,729 parent-child dyads recruited in Australian Parental Supply of Alcohol Longitudinal Study from Grade 7 classes. Data are from baseline surveys (M adolescent age=12.9), one-year follow-up. Logistic regressions tested prospective associations between 19 baseline parent- and adolescent-report parental, peer, and behavioural factors, and parental supply of sips one-year later.

Results: The strongest predictor of parental supply one-year later was baseline parental perception that their child engaged with substance-using peers (OR=1.20, 95%CI:1.08-1.34), followed by increased home alcohol access (OR=1.07, 95%CI:1.03-1.11), and lenient alcohol-specific rules (OR=0.88, 95%CI:0.78-0.99). Even in unadjusted models, parental supply was not associated with decreased monitoring or parenting consistency, poor relationship-quality, or adolescent behavioural problems

Discussions and Conclusions: If parents believed their child engaged with substance-using peers, they were more likely to supply their child with sips of alcohol one-year later. Parents may believe supplying a sip will protect their child from unsupervised alcohol use with their peers. Given that parents appear to be motivated to protect their child, research on how the common behaviour of a sip of alcohol impacts upon adolescent alcohol use trajectories is required to better understand the long-term impacts of parental supply.

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