



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Keeping Kids Off the Bottle

Alcohol Use Among High School Students — Georgia, 2007

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

It's illegal, dangerous, and all too common. Although it's against the law for people under the age of 21 to drink alcohol, approximately 20 percent of all alcohol in the U.S. is consumed by people aged 12 to 20 years.

Dr. Paul Melstrom is a researcher currently with CDC's National Center for Environmental Health, and he's joining us today to discuss work he performed with the state health department in Georgia on the widespread use of alcohol among under aged youth. Welcome to the show, Paul.

[Dr. Melstrom] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Paul, how many under aged youth die each year in alcohol-related incidents?

[Dr. Melstrom] From 2005 data, which is the most current data that we have, approximately 4,700 youth die in alcohol-related incidents every year.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are most of these killed in motor vehicle accidents?

[Dr. Melstrom] Unfortunately, the number one reason for alcohol-related fatalities in youth are motor vehicle accidents. About 2,000 of the 4,700 alcohol-related deaths were attributable to motor vehicle accidents. The second most prevalent was homicides, with about 1,200 out of the 4,700 alcohol-related deaths. And the third most common was suicides.

[Dr. Gaynes] So how are under aged youth getting alcohol?

[Dr. Melstrom] We found three ways in our study. The primary way was from someone giving it to them, so their peers are obtaining alcohol and then furnishing them with alcohol. The second way was by the students giving someone money to buy them alcohol; they had contact with someone who was 21 years of age or older or had a fake ID. And the third way, which we expected to see because most of the students were actually drinking alcohol at their home was taking it from a store or a family member.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are states doing to combat this problem?

[Dr. Melstrom] That's an important point, as states set the regulations for under aged drinking laws, and one of the most important pieces that is being researched and adopted in some states is something called a social host law. And the social host law actually makes it a crime for parents to permit a party to take place in their home where alcohol is served to minors. In no state in the United States is it legal for a parent to have a party where alcohol is served to children that are not their own.

[Dr. Gaynes] So what can parents do to discourage their children from consuming alcohol?

[Dr. Melstrom] They want to secure their alcohol that they have at their home, they want to talk to their kids about the dangers of alcohol, and most importantly, do not provide alcohol to their kids.

[Dr. Gaynes] Paul, where can listeners get more information about the dangers of under aged drinking?

[Dr. Melstrom] They can go to www.cdc.gov and type in the search box "alcohol and public health."

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Paul. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Paul Melstrom about the dangers of under aged drinking.

Remember, parents, talk to your children about the potential dangers of using alcohol and never provide alcohol to someone under the legal drinking age.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.