



# Intensity of Daily Drinking and Its Relation to Alcohol Use Disorders

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**Background:** Daily drinking is an important public health concern and informative for evaluating diagnostic classification. In particular, daily binge drinkers might be considered as the prototype of some forms of alcoholism, as this drinking pattern may drive many alcohol use disorder (AUD) symptoms. However, daily drinking potentially captures a wide range of drinkers, including light-moderate daily drinkers who exhibit presumed control over their drinking behavior and might benefit from salutary effects on health. This study examined the heterogeneity of daily drinkers in detail.

**Methods:** Data from the 2 waves of the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions were used. Participants who reported drinking “every day” during the last 12 months were classified as daily drinkers. A series of regression and logistic regression analyses were conducted to investigate the association between daily drinking and various outcomes.

**Results:** Daily drinkers were found to vary considerably from each other with respect to diagnostic status, level of consumption, demographic composition, and a range of drinking and health correlates. Further, a substantial number of daily binge drinkers were not diagnosed with AUD under the DSM-IV or DSM-5, although in most groups, the DSM-5 criteria diagnosed a larger percentage of participants.

**Conclusions:** Daily drinkers represent a highly heterogeneous group, and the correlates of daily drinking depend on the usual quantity of daily drinks and the frequency of alcohol-related problems in a given sample. Moreover, AUD, defined both according to DSM-IV and DSM-5, did not capture more than 68% of daily binge drinkers. Given that daily binge drinking is an extremely high threshold for use, this finding may present a challenge for our current classification system.

**Key Words:** Daily Drinking, Alcohol Dependence, Alcohol Use Disorder, DSM-IV, DSM-5.

THERE HAS BEEN increased debate in recent years over the best definition of risky alcohol use patterns (Dawson, 2011; Dawson et al., 2008, 2012; Gmel et al., 2011; Ogeil et al., 2015; Rolland and Naassila, 2017). Part of this debate has focused on daily drinking (i.e., alcohol use every day for a specified period of time), which is associated with both positive (Braun et al., 2000; Hajek et al., 2017; Stranges et al., 2006; Turvey et al., 2006; Walsh and Rehm, 1996) and negative health-related outcomes (Askgaard et al., 2015; Braun et al., 2000; Dawson et al., 2008; Marugame et al., 2007; Maura et al., 2012; Polen et al., 2010). Importantly, a wide range of drinking patterns comprises daily drinkers, which may underlie these mixed findings. For example, moderate daily drinkers (individuals who report a limited quantity

of drinks every day) exhibit general control over their drinking and may experience limited effects on health, but daily binge drinkers might have dyscontrolled use that is prototypical of some classical conceptualizations of alcoholism (e.g., Jellinek, 1960) and are at high risk for a multitude of health problems. Despite the theoretical interest of daily drinkers, including the effectiveness of diagnostic classification systems, there is a surprising lack of research on this group and, in particular, heterogeneity regarding their levels of use.

Of the studies conducted on daily drinking, 1 study has compared daily and near-daily risky drinkers with less frequent risky drinkers (Dawson et al., 2008); another included 2 categories of daily drinkers (Turvey et al., 2006); and only 2 studies to our knowledge have examined daily drinking quantities ranging from moderate daily drinkers to daily binge drinkers (Braun et al., 2000; Morois et al., 2017). However, Braun and colleagues (2000) assessed daily drinking indirectly, by dividing the usual weekly number of drinks by 7 and defining daily drinkers as those who drank an average of 7 drinks a week or more. Thus, presumably the vast majority of drinkers in Braun and colleagues (2000) did not drink on a daily basis. On the other hand, although Morois and colleagues (2017) used a more rigorous definition of daily drinking, their study focused specifically on sickness absence, leaving other potential correlates of daily drinking unexamined.

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