

By Stefania 2007 Science Editor

[More Alcohol, More than 10 Sex Partners](#)

Alcohol dependence linked to higher number of sex partners

Alcohol is considered by many a sexual stimulant and aphrodisiac. Alcohol "loosens up" a bit, removing inhibitions and making the inter-personal contact a lot easier. Alcohol gives people more (sometimes significantly more) guts to do what they desire, also being less aware of consequences. Frequent bingers engaged in unplanned sexual activity in 41% of the cases compared to just 8% in occasional drinkers and they had unprotected sex in 22% of the cases compared to 4%, as revealed by American studies. Now a team at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis revealed a direct connection between clinical diagnosis of alcohol dependence in young adults and increased number of sex partners in its research published in the journal *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research*. "Some participants in the study reported 50 or 100 partners, and research shows - and common sense tells you - that the more sex partners you have, the more likely you'll encounter someone with an STD. Chances also increase for unintended pregnancies and other health complications.", said first author Dr. Patricia Cavazos-Rehg, research instructor in the Department of Psychiatry. Alcohol dependence was the main condition in increasing the number of sex partners. It is characterized by an excessive use of alcohol affecting physical and mental health; usually, the patients drink daily. Binge drinking means sporadic consume of high quantities of alcohol; it is widespread amongst adolescents and young adults, like most of the study's 601 subjects, aged 18 to 25. Problem drinkers are on the way of turning dependent. The study also focused on conduct disorder, whose main symptoms being truancy from school, setting fires, getting into fights or displaying cruelty towards people or animals. "To my knowledge, most research in young adults has used a standard of 'up to six' sex partners when examining risk. But the average number of partners for the people in this study was 9.26, so instead of using 'six or more' partners as our standard for high risk, we increased that number to 10." said Cavazos-Rehg. All the subjects were unmarried and had alcohol-dependent members in their families. "We found that 22% of the non-dependent people had 10 or more partners, compared to 31% of problem drinkers and 45% of those who were alcohol dependent. We also found a risk for a high number of sexual partners among those with conduct disorder, independent of their level of alcohol involvement. And those with both alcohol dependence and conduct disorder were at greatest risk of having a high number of sex partners." said Cavazos-Rehg. The researchers suggest that young people treated for alcohol problems should be checked for STDs or HIV infection, while STD patients should be asked about their alcohol consume.