

# DRUG ALCOHOL FINDINGS *Research entry*

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## ▶ [Effects of 21st birthday brief interventions on college student celebratory drinking: A systematic review and meta-analysis.](#)

**Steinka-Fry K.T., Tanner-Smith E.E., Grant S. et al**  
**Addictive Behaviors: 2015, 50, p. 13–21.**

Unable to obtain a copy by clicking title? Try asking the author for a reprint by adapting this [prepared e-mail](#) or by writing to Dr Steinka-Fry at [k.steinka-fry@Vanderbilt.edu](mailto:k.steinka-fry@Vanderbilt.edu).

*Randomised trials of brief interventions send by email or letter to moderate 21st birthday drinking by US college students collectively failed to show consequent reductions in amounts drunk at these events, though they may have modestly reduced risks by lowering peak blood alcohol levels.*

**SUMMARY** College students' 21st birthday celebrations (when in the USA they become legally able to drink) often involve consumption of extreme amounts of alcohol as well as alcohol-related risks. This systematic review aimed to determine whether birthday-focused, individually-targeted, no-contact (email or letter-based) brief alcohol interventions reduce college students' 21st birthday celebratory drinking.

These interventions may involve information about alcohol poisoning, guidance on harm reduction, and personalised feedback or messages highlighting misperceptions of peer drinking levels.

A search identified nine randomised evaluations of 10 interventions to reduce 21st birthday drinking at US universities. Quantity of alcohol consumed and estimated blood alcohol concentration were the outcomes amalgamated from the studies using [meta-analytic](#) techniques.

Across these studies birthday-focused brief interventions had not significantly reduced quantities of alcohol consumed during birthday celebrations, but were associated with a small but significant reduction in estimated blood alcohol levels. The quality of this body of evidence was very low. In particular, it was limited by the fact that many of the students randomly allocated to the interventions did not complete initial or follow-up assessments.

The conclusion was there is no evidence that birthday-focused, individually-targeted brief interventions reduce drinking by students during 21st birthday celebrations, although they may yield small beneficial effects on estimated blood alcohol levels. Many methodological concerns were identified in the included studies.

Last revised 11 September 2015. First uploaded 11 September 2015

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