

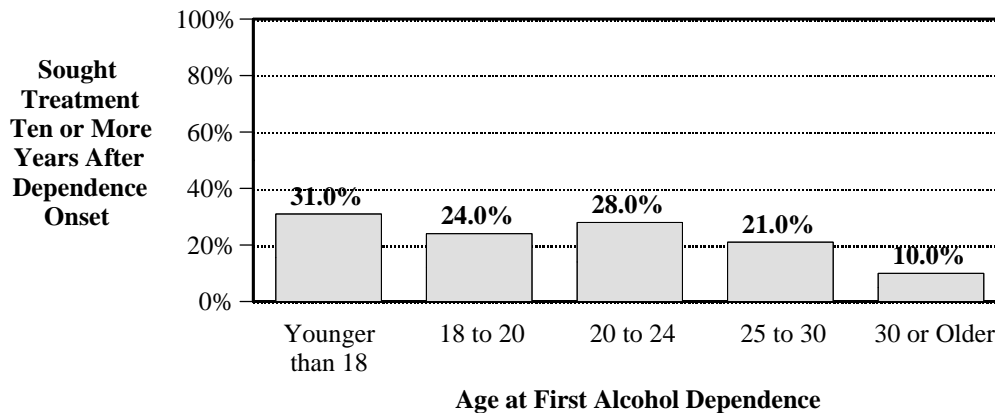
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Adults with Earlier Onset of Alcohol Dependence More Likely to Wait to Seek Treatment

One-fourth of adults who were ever alcohol dependent sought help or treatment for a reason related to their drinking at some point in their life, according to a recent analysis of data from the National Epidemiologic Study of Alcohol Related Conditions (NESARC). Among those who sought help, those with earlier onset of alcohol dependence took longer to do so. Thirty-one percent of persons who became dependent before age 18 waited 10 years or more after the onset of dependence to seek help or treatment, compared to 10% of those who became dependent at age 30 or older (see figure below). Yet adults first dependent at an earlier age were significantly more likely to have had multiple dependence episodes, episodes exceeding one year, and more dependence symptoms (data not shown). The authors conclude that “adolescents need to be screened and counseled about alcohol, and treatment services should be reinforced by programs and policies to delay age of first alcohol dependence” (p. e755).

Percentage of Alcohol-Dependent Persons Who Waited Ten Years or More After Dependence Onset to Seek Help or Treatment for a Reason Related to Their Drinking, by Age at First Alcohol Dependence



NOTES: The NESARC consisted of face-to-face interviews with a multistage probability sample of 43,093 adults conducted in 2001 and 2002. This analysis focused on 4,778 persons diagnosed as alcohol dependent ever in their lives using DSM-IV criteria. Of persons ever dependent, 15% were diagnosed before age 18, 32% from ages 18 to 20, 22% from ages 21 to 24, 11% from ages 25 to 29 and 21% at age 30 or older.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Hingson, R.W.; Heeren, T.; and Winter, M.R. “Age of Alcohol-Dependence Onset: Associations with Severity of Dependence and Seeking Treatment,” *Pediatrics* 118(3):e755-e763, 2006. Available online at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/118/3/e755>.

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