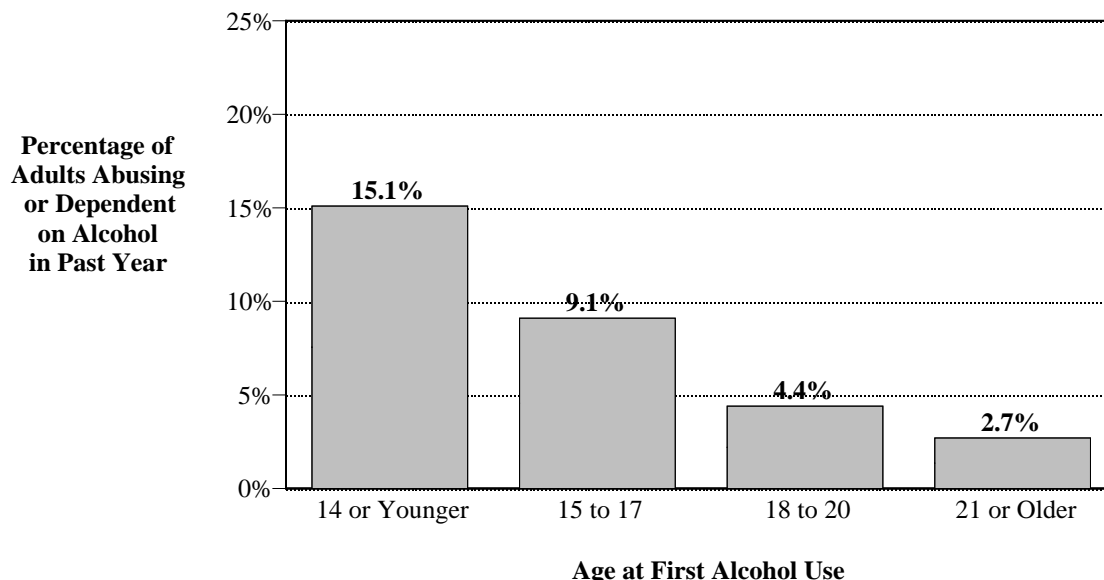


A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research
University of Maryland, College Park

***Persons Who Start Using Alcohol Before Age 15
More Than Five Times More Likely to Abuse or Be Dependent on Alcohol as Adults***

Early alcohol use is associated with a higher risk of meeting the criteria for alcohol abuse or dependence as an adult, according to data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). In 2010, 6.9% of adults aged 21 or older met the criteria for alcohol abuse or dependence in the past year. However, this figure changes dramatically when the age at first alcohol use (not counting a sip or two of alcohol) is taken into account. Those who first used alcohol before the age of 15 were nearly four times more likely to meet the criteria for past year alcohol abuse or dependence than those who started using alcohol between the ages of 18 and 20 (15.1% vs. 4.4%) and more than five times more likely than those who began using at or after age 21 (15.1% vs. 2.7%). These findings suggest that early alcohol use may be a warning sign for youth at high risk for developing alcohol abuse or dependence.

Percentage of Adults Aged 21 or Older Who Abused or Were Dependent on Alcohol in the Past Year, by Age at First Alcohol Use, 2010



NOTES: Alcohol use is defined as having more than a sip or two of alcohol. Dependence or abuse is based on DSM-IV definitions.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Results from the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings*, 2011. Available online at <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH/2k10ResultsRev/NSDUHresultsRev2010.pdf>.