



Alcopops and Girls: Fact Sheet

General information on alcopops

- More than 10 million American youth under the age of 21 drink alcohol, and over 7 million of them are binge drinkers.ⁱ
- Alcopops, also known as “malternatives,” “RTDs” (ready to drink) or “FABs” (flavored alcoholic beverages), are fruit-flavored, malt-based drinks that come in colorful, child-oriented packaging. The sweetness and flavoring hide the taste of alcohol.ⁱⁱ
- The alcohol industry calls them “flavored malt beverages” or “low-alcohol refreshers,” but these drinks typically contain 5-7 percent alcohol by volume, more than most beers.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Some popular brands are Smirnoff Ice, Skyy Blue, Stolichnaya Citrona, Bacardi Silver, Jack Daniel’s Original Hard Cola, Captain Morgan Gold and Mike’s Hard Lemonade.

Alcopops and teenagers

- Data provided by the alcohol industry shows that a significant minority (41 percent) of flavored malt beverages are consumed by young people ages 21-27.
- A majority of teens 17-18 years old (51 percent) and many teens 14-16 years old (35 percent) have tried alcopops, compared to less than a quarter of adults (24 percent).^{iv}
- Teens are much more likely than adults to recall brand names of alcopops. Whereas more than half of adults (52 percent) who are aware of the existence of alcopops can not even name a single brand, brand awareness among teens is very high: Mike’s Hard Lemonade (41 percent), Smirnoff Ice (31 percent), Doc Otis’ Hard Lemonade (23 percent), Sublime (20 percent) and others.^v
- When asked what one type of alcoholic drink they would most prefer to drink, nearly a third of teens (30 percent) said “alcopops” compared to only 16 percent for beer and 16 percent for mixed drinks.^{vi}

Alcopops advertising to girls

- Teenage girls (33 percent) were more likely to express a preference for alcopops compared to teenage boys (27 percent).^{vii}
- Girls saw a staggering 95 percent more magazine advertising for low-alcohol refreshers than legal-age women on a per capita basis in 2002.^{viii}
- Women ages 21-34, the age group often identified as the target audience for alcohol advertising, were actually less exposed per capita to magazine advertising for alcopops and beer than girls ages 12-20.^{ix}
- Exposure of underage youth to alcohol advertising in magazines declined between 2001 and 2002 in every category except low-alcohol refreshers, for which exposure to girls grew by a staggering 216 percent.^x

Health effects of alcohol on women and girls

- It is estimated that teenage girls who binge drink are up to 63 percent more likely to become teen mothers.^{xi}
- Heavy alcohol use compromises bone health and increases the risk of osteoporosis by decreasing bone density and weakening the bones. These effects are especially striking in young women, whose bones are still developing.^{xii}
- Girls who binge drink are at three times the risk of thinking about or attempting suicide as girls who never drink alcohol.^{xiii}
- Heavy alcohol consumption increases risk for menstrual disorders and increases the risk of infertility.^{xiv}
- Females are more susceptible to the development of alcohol-related medical disorders, such as liver disease (hepatitis, cirrhosis), cardiac problems and brain impairment than their male counterparts.^{xv}

Alcohol industry admissions on alcopops

- “The beauty of this category [alcopops] is that it brings in new drinkers, people who really don’t like the tastes of beer.”^{xvi}
- “With younger drinkers, their palates haven’t quite matured yet to drinks like bourbon. Malternatives are a sweeter drink, they’re easier to drink and it takes less time to mature to the taste.”^{xvii}
- “This is the perfect ‘bridging beverage’ [between carbonated fruit juices and the new hard lemonades].”^{xviii}

ⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. “2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health,” 2003.

ⁱⁱ The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University. “Teen Tipplers: America’s underage Drinking Epidemic.” Revised February 2003. 28.

ⁱⁱⁱ Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY). “Overexposed: Youth a Target of Alcohol Advertising in Magazines.” September 24, 2004. 5.

^{iv} Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI). “Alcopops: Main Findings. What Teens and Adults are Saying about Alcopops.” Poll released May 2001. Poll conducted by Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates for CSPI.

^v Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI). “Alcopops: Summary of Findings. What Teens and Adults are Saying about Alcopops.” Poll released May 2001. www.cspinet.org/booze/alcopops_summary.htm

^{vi} *Ibid.*

^{vii} *Ibid.*

^{viii} David H. Jernigan; Joshua Ostroff; Craig Ross; James A. O’Hara. (Courtesy of CAMY.) “Sex Differences in Adolescent Exposure to Alcohol Advertising in Magazines.” Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine. July 2004.

^{ix} *Ibid.*

^x *Ibid.*

^{xi} T.S. Dee, “The Effects of Minimum Legal Drinking Ages on Teen Childbearing,” *The Journal of Human Resources* 36, no. 4 (2001): 824-838.

^{xii} National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), National Institutes of Health, US Department of Health and Human Services. *Alcohol—An Important Women’s Health Issue*. Alcohol Alert. July 2004.

^{xiii} National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University, US Department of Health and Human Services. “CASA Analysis of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey.” 1999.

^{xiv} D.W. Cramer; M.B. Goldman; F. Grodstein. “Infertility in Women and Moderate Alcohol Use,” *American Journal of Public Health*, 84 (9). 1994. 1429-1432.

^{xv} National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University, US Department of Health and Human Services. “The Formative Years: Pathways to Substance Abuse Among Girls and Young Women Ages 8-22.” 2003.

^{xvi} Marlene Coulis, director of new products, Anheuser-Busch, quoted in *Advertising Age*, April 22, 2002.

^{xvii} Trish Rohrer, brand-development manager, Boston Beer Company, quoted in *Restaurants USA*, May 2002.

^{xviii} Terry Hopper, national sales manager, Sublime Hard Lemonade, quoted in *Washington Post*, “New Kick on the Block: Will Spike Lemonades Pick Up Where Wine Coolers Left Off?,” September 13, 2000.