

Pregaming

Planning Resources: Prevention Education & Harm Reduction

Research-Based Findings

Pregaming Trends:

- Between 64% and 98% of U.S. college students report pregame in the last month. Pregaming is when someone drinks large amounts of alcohol before attending a party or event (e.g., formals, sporting events). Pregaming accounts for a large percentage of the number of drinks that are consumed over the course of an evening or occasion.
- Research about students' drinking patterns may be limited because students often do not include the number of drinks or the amount of alcohol they consumed when pregame when they report how much they drank the last time they "partied" or "went out." Students also do not include the amount they drank when pregame when reporting the most drinks they consumed on an occasion in the last 30 days, another common research question.
- Pregaming often occurs in same-gender groups. Males and females are equally likely to pregame and the amount of alcohol consumed is comparable. Men generally drink beer, while women drink hard alcohol because most hard alcohol contains fewer calories and women face societal pressures to be thin. This increases the risk of health issues, as well as violence and exploitation that disproportionately affect women.

What Contributes to Pregaming:

- Students pregame in order to get drunk, reduce social anxiety, make bonding and romantic connections easier, save money and when alcohol is not available where they are going.
- Pregaming is a problem in countries where the legal drinking age is lower than 21. This underscores that pregame in the United States is not only caused by underage individuals being unable to drink legally at licensed outlets or parties.
- Binge drinking (consuming 5+ drinks) is associated with high status groups (white, male, affluent) and is one way to display power, money and time and to demonstrate "skill" at obtaining and consuming large amounts of alcohol. This especially occurs in the pregame context. Students from lower status groups (women, racial/ethnic minorities, GLBTQ) may binge drink to enhance their social standing.

Protective Strategies:

- Campuses with higher total rates of volunteering have lower rates of drinking and of secondhand alcohol-related consequences (the harm caused by excessive drinking to those around the drinker, such as damage to property, violence, noise and arguments).
 - This underscores the importance of helping students get engaged in volunteering and other co-curricular activities.
- Students who pregame before attending an alcohol-free event generally consume more alcohol than students who are pregame before a party. However, the students who attend the alcohol-free event will drink less in total over the course of the night than the students who pregame and then go to a party. This suggests that alcohol-free events are protective for both drinkers and nondrinkers.

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Current Efforts

Various Student Affairs departments offer late night programming:

- Programming and dining events are scheduled to coincide with high-drinking events, such as key football games and Halloween.
- The CU Police Department has staff at all home football games to identify and remove intoxicated students, bring them off-site for an evaluation and sometimes transport them to the Addiction Recovery Center. Staff from the Office of Student Conduct is present to setup an appointment for students who are ticketed.
- Some CU-Boulder sorority chapters have instituted mandatory sober time two hours before events. Food and nonalcoholic beverages are offered to ensure that women arrive more sober to events, such as formals.
- Night Ride, a free taxi service on campus, provides students with a safe way of getting home.
- All incoming students are taught the warning signs of alcohol toxicity and the Recovery Position during orientation. The Recovery Position shows them how to help prevent death by AOD overdose.
- Community Health offers student training programs for bystander intervention, alcohol serving size assessment, drug interaction and refusal skills.

Future Opportunities

Student Engagement and Connection:

- Increase coordination and consider expansion of events and tools that improve pathways for student connection, such as:
 - Enhance usability of the CU-Boulder Events Calendar
 - Extend Week of Welcome activities
 - Extend and coordinate late night programming
 - Improve Student Organizations and Finance Office website to be more user-friendly
 - Disseminate late night and event programming information throughout Student Affairs

Other Opportunities:

- Create an Alcohol and Other Drugs working group of Student Affairs staff from key departments to share information and identify areas to target for prevention, skill building or intervention.
- Address pregame directly in I Wish I'd Known 2.0, a Community Health-delivered presentation that is available to residence halls and student groups.
- Implement the Red Cup activity, which corrects students' misperceptions of what constitutes a serving size of alcohol.
- Offer institutional support for required sober hours for sorority chapters. Encourage food and water be provided during sober hours, because eating food before drinking can slow the rate at which blood alcohol content rises.
- Collect and analyze data on why people choose to pregame to help create more targeted interventions.