



Mott Poll Report

December 17, 2018
Volume 33
Issue 2

Excessive Celebration Can Lead to Parenting Hangovers

Alcoholic beverages are frequently a part of special events and celebrations, such as weddings and holiday gatherings. For parents, celebrating with alcohol comes with the responsibility of making plans for the care of their children. The C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health asked a national sample of parents of children 0-9 years about their experiences with alcohol and special occasions.

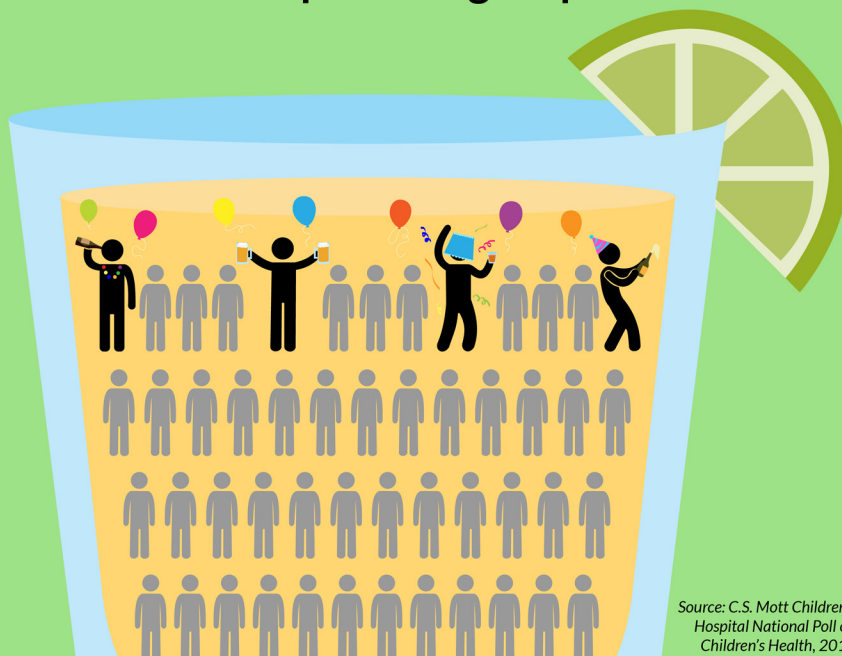
Most parents reported drinking alcoholic beverages during special events, either often (27%), sometimes (36%), or rarely (17%). Among parents who reported drinking alcoholic beverages during special events, 73% said they are *very likely* to make plans in advance for someone to watch their child during the event, and 68% said they are *very likely* to plan for transportation (e.g., designated driver). Parents who rarely drink were less likely to plan in advance for childcare and transportation the night of the special event, compared to parents who drink often or sometimes.

Fewer parents considered the day after the event in their advance planning. Only 47% said they are *very likely* to think about how much they will drink at the special event, which could affect their level of impairment the following day; and 64% said they are *very likely* to make plans for someone to take care of their child the day after the event. In contrast, 24% of parents were *not likely* to make plans for alcohol limits or day-after child care.

Eight percent of parents reported a prior situation where they may have been too impaired from alcohol to fulfill their parenting responsibilities; among those parents, 54% said the experience caused them to limit alcohol consumption in the future, and 46% said it made them plan ahead for child care.

One in 3 parents (29%) said they know of another adult who might have caused an unsafe situation for their child due to drinking alcohol on a special occasion. Most often, these parents noted the concern that the other adult was too impaired or hung over to supervise their child (61%) or to handle a possible emergency (48%); and less commonly that the adult drove with a child while impaired (37%), got violent or out of control in front of the child (28%), or injured the child (7%).

8% of parents say they have been too impaired from alcohol to fulfill parenting responsibilities



Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2018

Report Highlights

1 in 4 parents who drink alcohol on special occasions are not likely to plan how much they drink or whether they'll be able to take care of their child the next day.

3 in 10 parents know of an adult who may have caused an unsafe situation for their child due to drinking alcohol on a special occasion.

1 in 12 parents admitted to a prior situation where they may have been too impaired from alcohol to take care of their parenting responsibilities.

Data Source & Methods

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by GfK Custom Research, LLC (GfK), for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital. The survey was administered in October 2018 to a randomly selected, stratified group of parents age 18 and older (n=2,007). Adults were selected from GfK's web-enabled KnowledgePanel® that closely resembles the U.S. population. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the Census Bureau. The survey completion rate was 60% among panel members contacted to participate. This report is based on responses from 1,170 parents who had at least one child 0-9 years. The margin of error is ±2 to 6 percentage points and higher among subgroups.

A publication from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, the University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases, and the University of Michigan Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Center.

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C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health

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Implications

Special events like weddings, reunions, and holiday parties offer adults an opportunity to socialize with other adults. Alcohol is often a part of these events. But when those adults are parents to young children, advance planning is necessary to ensure that children have appropriate care and supervision during and after the celebration.

Most parents are good about taking their children under consideration when planning for the evening of a special event, which includes arranging for childcare and transportation. Somewhat fewer parents plan for the day following the event, when their parenting ability could be impaired by the after-effects of imbibing. Day-after planning includes thinking about how much alcohol is likely to be consumed, and whether that amount will lead to a hangover the next day.

An important finding from this Mott Poll is that 1 in 12 parents of children 0-9 years admitted to at least one prior situation where they may have been too impaired from alcohol to fulfill their parenting responsibilities. Many of these parents indicated they learned a lesson from that experience, reporting that they changed their habits with regard to the amount of alcohol they consumed and that they were more careful about making plans for the care of their children during and after social events that included alcohol. About the same proportion of mothers and fathers acknowledged a prior lapse in judgment related to alcohol, reinforcing the fact that the risks of parental alcohol use should not be viewed as relevant to only moms or dads.

A considerable number of parents responding to this Mott Poll (3 in 10 parents) said they know of another parent who had created an unsafe situation for their child due to alcohol. Parents reported knowing about serious situations, including impaired parents driving with their child in the car, as well as parents getting violent or even injuring their child. Though rare, occurrences of this severity should prompt adults to step in and ensure the child's immediate safety, such as keeping the child in another adult's care until the drunk parent can sober up, and to urge the offending parent to make better choices in the future regarding alcohol use.

More commonly, Mott Poll respondents described situations in which another parent was too impaired or hung over to adequately supervise their child or handle a possible emergency. A parent who is technically at home "watching their child" but passed out on the couch is unlikely to recognize the everyday risks of childhood, such as choking, falling, or getting into dangerous household products. This may be a situation where family, friends or neighbors may step in to help, by inviting the child over to play, keeping an eye on children playing outside, or stopping by to make sure everyone is safe.

An interesting finding from this Mott Poll is that those least likely to plan in advance were the parents who said they rarely drink alcohol at special events, compared to parents who often or sometimes drink alcohol. Parents who rarely drink alcohol may fail to recognize their own likelihood of consuming alcohol, and thus overlook planning for the night of and day after a special event. However, even rare instances of celebrating with alcohol can have serious consequences for children.

During the holiday season, parents should plan ahead to determine their approach to celebrations that feature alcohol. This should include strategies to avoid over-indulging, such as alternating alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Transportation plans should ensure that the parent arrives home safely, and that the babysitter is not relying on an impaired parent for a ride home. If alcohol use might cause the parent to feel suboptimal the following day, childcare arrangements might involve the child staying overnight at a friend or relative's home.