

ALCOHOL RELATED BEHAVIORS AMONG MISSOURI COLLEGE STUDENT ATHLETES

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is Missouri's higher education substance abuse consortium focused on promoting healthy behaviors on college campuses. In order to gain an understanding of the current health behaviors of college students, PIP implements the Missouri College Health Behavior Survey (MCHBS) each spring. The information gained from the MCHBS not only allows PIP to learn more about the risky behaviors of Missouri college students as a whole, but also provides the opportunity to focus on the behaviors of particular sub-populations such as student athletes. The tables below present information on the risky drinking behaviors as well as the protective behavior strategies (PSB) practiced by athletes in comparison to all students.

Risky Drinking Behavior	Missouri College Students	Missouri College Intercollegiate/ Varsity Athletes
Binge drank in the past 2 weeks (5+ drinks in 2 hours)	25.2%	45.1%
21 birthday shots in past academic year	8.3%	10%
Beer bong and/or keg stand in past academic year	26.8%	46.1%
Drinking games past year	60.7%	79.9%
Drink specials past year	40.6%	46.8%

DISCUSSION

The MCHBS asks a variety of questions that reveal how many college students are engaging in high risk drinking behaviors. Students were asked to indicate whether or not they had participated in the listed behavior within the past year. Results show that athletes reported higher rates on each of the above risky behaviors when compared with the general student body.

The MCHBS also asks questions to gauge the level at which protective behavior strategies (PBS) are being practiced. These strategies can be positive tools for students to use as they help students to drink in a healthier and safer way. The table to the right shows that athletes are just as likely, if not more likely to utilize a PBS "usually" or "always" when compared to all students. Furthermore, 39% of student athletes reported being ready to try, or currently trying, to drink in a healthier and safer way. This is compared to 31% among the general student body reporting a readiness to change.

SUMMARY

The athletes on Missouri campuses face unique circumstances when compared to their non-athlete

Protective Behavior Strategy	Missouri College Students	Missouri College Intercollegiate/ Varsity Athletes
Used a designated driver in the past year	64.3%	74.1%
Limited the amount of money spent on alcohol in the past year	61.4%	64.9%
Eaten before and/or during alcohol consumption	76.6%	80.9%
Had at least one person in the group who remained sober	59.9%	66.4%
Avoided mixing different types of alcohol	41.7%	40.0%
Made sure they went home with a friend	65.3%	67.4%
Knew where their drink had been at all times	80.9%	80.4%

Data taken from the 2013 Missouri College Health Behavior Survey

counterparts. As such, some of the behaviors inquired about through the MCHBS reveal that athlete behavior differs when compared to the behavior of all students. Athletes are practicing many of the highest risk drinking behaviors; however, they are doing so in tandem with multiple PBS. While there is no safe level at which to do these risky alcohol related behaviors, it is possible that the negative consequences could still be reduced as a result of the PBS. Furthermore, the utilization of PBS show a readiness to commit to healthy drinking habits by college athletes in Missouri. As athletes are already practicing certain PBS, they may be open to incorporating additional strategies into their lifestyles.

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