Health Behavior News Service reports that school prevention programs aimed at curbing alcohol misuse in children are somewhat helpful, enough so to deserve consideration for widespread use, according to a large, international systematic review.

The most significant program effects were reductions in episodes of drunkenness and binge drinking, reviewers found.

“This school-based prevention programs that take a social skills-oriented approach or that focus on classroom behavior management can work to reduce alcohol problems in young people,” David Foxcroft, lead review author said. “However, there is good evidence that these sorts of approaches are not always effective.”

The reasons for inconsistent results with these programs are unclear, said Foxcroft, from Great Britain’s Oxford Brookes University.

Foxcroft and co-author Alexander Tsertsvadze, at the University of Ottawa Evidence-Based Practice Center, in Canada, analyzed 53 randomized controlled trials done in a wide range of countries with youth ages 5 to 18 when studies began.

Forty-one studies took place in North America, six in Europe and six in Australia. One was conducted in India and one in Swaziland. Two studies transpired in multiple locations.

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This Issue:
- The Effectiveness of School-Based Programs
- Health Behavior News Service
- Foxcroft and co-author
- Analysis of 53 randomized controlled trials
- Youth ages 5 to 18 when studies began.
- Results vary across different regions.
Most studies assessed generic prevention programs that targeted several risky behaviors, such as drinking, smoking and drug abuse, while the rest focused on alcohol-specific programs.

The researchers compared drinking among the youngsters who took part in various school-based programs to the drinking done by students who had not participated. The youngsters in the comparison groups might have participated in other alcohol-prevention programs, such as family-based ones, or they might have just experienced the ordinary school curriculum.

The authors concluded that their evidence supported the use of certain generic prevention programs over alcohol-specific ones. They cited the Life Skills Training Program, the Unplugged Program and the Good Behavior Game as particularly effective interventions.

The review appears in the May 2011 issue of The Cochrane Library, a publication of The Cochrane Collaboration, an international organization that evaluates medical research. Systematic reviews draw evidence-based conclusions about medical practice after considering both the content and quality of existing medical trials on a topic.

“These findings are important,” David Jernigan, Ph.D., director of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, said. “Efforts to reduce young people’s drinking through school-based programs are legion. A $300 million federal program supporting school-based prevention ended last year, partly based on research findings that these programs do not work. This review does not find that. Instead it indicates that there is something in certain school-based programs that in fact can work.”

Jernigan emphasizes that “school-based programs are so often expected to do the whole job of prevention, and this is an unfair expectation.” He describes school-based programs functioning as “lonely voices” in an environment saturated with marketing messages promoting youthful drinking. The amount of drinking in a youngster’s home and community and the price of alcohol are other major influences that need addressing, he said. Until then, “we can't expect large effects from school-based programs alone.”

Health Behavior News Service is part of the Center for Advancing Health.

Source: http://www.cadca.org/resources/detail/review-finds-some-school-based-programs-curb-alcohol-misuse
Teenagers who drink are more likely to spend extra hours at their computers for activities not related to their schoolwork, a new study shows.

Researchers from Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City found that visiting social networking sites and downloading or listening to music are among the pastimes linked to drinking. The study, published in the May issue of *Addictive Behaviors*, anonymously surveyed 264 American teenagers ranging in age from 13 to 17. The research showed that teens who reported drinking in the past month used a computer for recreational activities for more hours a week than teens who said they did not drink. No link was found between alcohol and computer use for educational purposes, and the researchers found no significant connection between video games or online shopping and drinking.

"While the specific factors linking teenage drinking and computer use are not yet established, it seems likely that adolescents are experimenting with drinking and activities on the Internet," study author Jennifer Epstein, a public health researcher at Weill Cornell, said in a news release from the university. "In turn, exposure to online material such as alcohol advertising or alcohol-using peers on social networking sites could reinforce teens' drinking."

The findings should serve as a red flag for parents, Epstein noted. "Children are being exposed to computers and the Internet at younger ages," she said. "For this reason, it's important that parents are actively involved in monitoring their children's computer usage, as well as alcohol use."

Epstein added that parents might also need to reinforce their ground rules on both alcohol consumption and computer time. Among the risk factors for teenage alcohol abuse:

- Lax parental supervision
- Poor communication between parents and teens
- Family conflicts
- Inconsistent or harsh discipline
- A family history of alcohol or drug abuse

"The Internet offers a wealth of information and opportunities for intellectual and social enrichment," Gil Botvin, chief of the division of prevention and health behavior at Weill Cornell, said in the news release. "However, it is becoming clear that there may also be a downside to Internet use. More systematic research is needed to better understand those potential dangers and how to combat them."

**More information**

The American Academy of Pediatrics has more on teenagers and Internet safety.

(SOURCES: Weill Cornell Medical College, news release, May 9, 2011)
Name: Daisy Carter

Title: Community Outreach Specialist

Location: NCADD of the Central MS Area, Inc. / MUDPC of Madison & Rankin Counties

The thing you love most about prevention: I truly love to educate the youth about underage drinking and drug usage. Prevention is a wonderful opportunity to give teens a reality check of negative outcomes that come along with bad decision making.

Favorite place to vacation: Destin, Florida

On a rainy day, I love to: Wrap up in my handmade blanket with a good book.

When I have spare time, I: Read, outside, while watching my little one climb trees.
Local Coalition News

Smarter Choices Youth Coalition of Lauderdale County Hosts First Youth Festival

More than 300 youth and adults attended the first youth festival sponsored by the Smarter Choices Youth Coalition of Lauderdale County. Former professional basketball player Marcus Campbell gave an inspiring talk as did Lauderdale County Judge Veldore Young. Youth enjoyed carnival-style games and refreshments.

Hands-on activities included field sobriety tests administered by the Lauderdale County Sheriff's Dept. Youth enjoyed visiting with Mississippi State University's mascot, "Bully." More than 40 volunteers assisted with the festival, including members of the youth and adult coalitions, local social service clubs, churches and individuals.

"The festival, especially to be our first one, exceeded our expectations," said LaTonya Horne-Cook, SPF SIG project director at Weems Community Mental Health Center.

The event was funded through the SPF SIG and SAPT grants from the Miss. Dept. of Mental Health Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse.
Right: More than 300 youth and adults gathered for the featured speaker, former professional basketball player Marcus Campbell.

Left: Lauderdale County Deputies assist a child with the field sobriety test.
Local Coalition News

Decorating Doors during Alcohol Awareness Month!

Members of the Smarter Choices Community Coalition of Leake County and local SADD chapter sponsored a door decorating contest for the 6th grade classes at Thomastown Attendance Center and Carthage Junior High School. The contest was held in April in observance of Alcohol Awareness Month.