



Teenagers' decision to have a first alcoholic drink may be influenced by their best friends, a new study suggests.

Researchers found having friends who drink and who have access to alcohol is the most important factor in predicting when a teen starts drinking.

The influence of best friends was stronger than a teen's own history of troubled behavior or family history of alcoholism, the study found.

"When you start drinking, even with kids who come from alcoholic families, they don't get their first drinks from their family," researcher Samuel Kuperman of the University of Iowa said in a statement. "They get their first drinks from their friends. They have to be able to get it. If they have friends who have alcohol, then it's easier for them to have that first drink."

The nationwide study included 820 teens ages 14 to 17. Less than half of the participants had an alcohol-dependent parent. The researchers found among teens who reported trying alcohol, almost four in 10 said their best friends also drank. Kuperman told Live Science that having most of one's best friends drink doubles a teenager's risk for having a first whole drink.

The researchers note that starting to drink before age 15 increases the risk of alcohol abuse. The findings appear in the journal *Pediatrics*.

Do you suspect that your child is abusing alcohol or using drugs? Are you worried? Have you noticed some changes with your child? As a parent, it is normal to be concerned. Listen to your intuitive voice and [click here](#) to read on!