

# University Health Watch

## The newsletter for College Students by College Students

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### You do the Math...

Ever stayed up all night cramming for a test thinking that was the best way to pass? Well if you were preparing for a math test, you might have caused yourself more harm than good. A recent study published by the *Journal of Sleep Research*

tested 50 college undergraduate students for the effects of sleep deprivation on a Math Effort Task (MET). From the very first problem of the test, the sleep deprived group consistently chose to perform the problems from the easiest level of the test. In addition, these group members missed more of the higher level problems than did members of the non-sleep deprived group. As the students advanced through the test, it was found that the sleep deprived suf-

fered the most on the last third of the test, suggesting a faster wearing down effect.

So, if you're studying for that tough test, do yourself a favor and hit the bed before you spend the whole night hitting the books.

Reference: Engle-Friedman M, Riel S, Golan R, Ventuneac AM, Davis CM, Jefferson AD, et al. The Effect of Sleep Loss on Next Day Effort. *J. Sleep Res.* 2003 Jun; 12(2): 113-124.

<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1046/j.1365-2869.2003.00351.x>

By Matt Kirksey

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Image: [www2.asd.wednet.edu/Pioneer/barnard/resources/clart/kidsca.htm](http://www2.asd.wednet.edu/Pioneer/barnard/resources/clart/kidsca.htm)

### Sorority Sisters Beware...

Students are faced with many new challenges when they venture away from home to go off to college. When the students are on a college campus and no longer under the watchful eyes of their parents, they often develop bad eating habits. According to the Boston Herald in February 2005, eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia, continue to be a growing issue in college aged students. The American College of Nutrition conducted a study in 2002 which sampled 1,899 college students. The study results showed that of 4.5% women

and 1.4 % of men had previously had treatment for an eating disorder of some sort, and 10.9% of women and 4% of men were at risk of developing an eating disorder. The majority of these students with the risk of developing an eating disorder stated that their weight concerns interfered with their performance in school



Image: [www.holycross.edu](http://www.holycross.edu)

academically. The study also concluded that young women that were members of a sorority and that lived in separate residences may be at an increased risk.

Reference:  
1. Hoerr S, Bokram R, Lugo B, Bivins T, and Keast R. Risk for Disordered Eating Relates to both Gender and Ethnicity for College Students. *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* [serial on the Internet]. 2002 [cited April 2006]; 307-314; [7 p.] Available from: <http://www.jacn.org/cgi/content/full/21/4/307>  
2. Heslam J. Eating Disorders Harsh Lesson in College. The Boston Herald [serial on the Internet]. February 28, 2005 [cited April 2006]; [1 p.] Available from: <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/bostonherald/799439061.html>

By Emily Scarborough

# Smoking and Alcohol use... Are they related?

By Erik Gable

So you're going off to college soon. You're leaving home for the first time, you're surrounded by strangers, and you have no idea where your Monday morning 8:00 class in Samford Hall is. First year college students are faced with a multitude of choices to make without their usual parental supervision. If you are a cigarette smoker, these may not be the biggest problems you face. Choosing to excessively use alcohol and tobacco products is a choice many freshman face.

It's obvious to observe upon entering a college "keger" or downtown bar that there are many people smoking while enjoying an adult beverage. It may be trivial to some to say that there is a correlation between the two. So, is it true? In fact there is evidence of a

relation between the two. Studies show students who binge drank were greater than five times more likely to be smokers. The number of cigarettes smoked also tended to be directly correlated to the amount of alcohol consumed. So it is true, higher levels of drinking and smoking can somewhat predict higher levels of drinking and smoking. Probably not a surprise to most, the correlation was highest during the week on Thursday night and on the weekend nights (Friday and Saturday).

So what can be gleaned from all this? One would have to have been



Image: Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam  
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living under a rock to not understand the dangers associated with smoking and drinking. As with everything moderation is the key. A puff here and a drink there probably won't kill you, but moderate levels of these vices could most certainly reduce the likelihood of abusing these substances. After all, didn't your mother ever tell you that smoking is bad for you?

Reference: Dierker L, Lloyd-Richardson E, Stolar M, Flay B, Tiffany S, Collins L, et al. The proximal association between smoking and alcohol use among first year college students. *Drug & Alcohol Dependence*. 2006;81(1):1-9

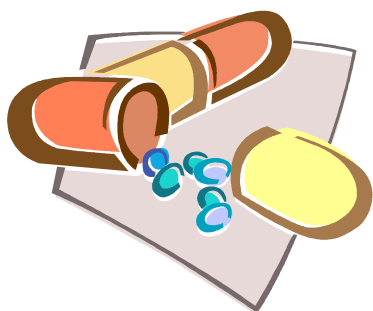
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/03768716>

# Prescription Stimulants... The next step in getting a "Higher" Education

By Nick Preuitt

A study was conducted in which college students from 119 four-year institutions were given surveys pertaining to non-prescription stimulant usage. Thirty-nine states were included in the survey, and an administrative school official randomly selected 215 students from each college. The questionnaire included questions pertaining to non-medical use of prescription stimulants, illicit drug use, tobacco use, and alcohol use.

The research yielded the general theme that certain subgroups of students were more likely to use non-prescription



stimulants such as Ritalin, Dexedrine, or Adderall.

Caucasians, Greeks, and students with lower GPAs were all found to be more likely to use stimulants non-medically. Additionally, men were more likely than women to admit to using the drugs. In regards to wrongful usage, 6.9% of students reported lifetime use, 4.1% reported past month use, and 2.1% reported past month use. It was also found that colleges in the Northeast had a higher rate of prevalence than the others. The reasons for usage were found to be improving concentration, increasing alertness, and getting high.

Epidemiological studies suggest that a staggering amount of non-prescription stimulant users develop addiction to the drugs. Another study found that 90% of wrongful stimulant usage occurred because the drugs were obtained from peers or family mem-

bers. In these cases, the users would be unaware of the potential life-threatening drug interactions and adverse effects of the stimulants.

Perhaps among the most disturbing findings was that drinking among college students has remained unchanged for the past decade, but prescription drug use has increased. Only marijuana use tops non-prescription drug use as the most common form of illicit drug abuse. Since colleges have limited control systems implemented compared to elementary and secondary schools, the study suggested offering more pharmaceutical delivery systems that were not as open to abuse, such as Concerta.

Reference: McCabe SE, Knight JR, Teter CJ, Wechsler H. Non-medical Use of Prescription Stimulants Among US College Students: Prevalence and Correlates from a National Survey. *Addiction*, 2005; 99: 96-106

[http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/cas/Documents/stimulants/McCabe\\_2005.pdf](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/cas/Documents/stimulants/McCabe_2005.pdf)

# Binge Drinking determined by your state...

By Mitch Robinson

Choosing where you will go to college can determine more than just the logo on the front of your sweatshirt. A recent study, in the *American Journal of Public Health*, of 120 accredited 4-year colleges from 40 states has shown a close correlation between the binge drinking rates of college students in a specific state and the binge drinking rates of non-students from the same state. Binge drinking, defined as the consumption of more than 5 alcoholic drinks in a row at a single time, is a practice that leads to increased drunken driving, violence, rape, unplanned pregnancy, alcohol poisoning, and STD transmission. The study used two previous studies, the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study (CAS) survey and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), to establish a sufficient sample size for each of the 40 states. The CAS survey polled only college students and the BRFSS polled all adults. Overall, the CAS binge drinking rates reported for college students was 46.5% and the BRFSS rate

for all adults was 14.8% and 31.0% of 18-24 yo nonstudents. It was found that 36.1% of college students participate in binge drinking in the 10 states with the lowest percent of adult binge drinkers. This is compared to the 52.7% of the college students who binge drink in the 10 states with the highest rate of adult binge drinking. This is a startling 16% difference.



Photo Credit: [Nathan Wood](#) / the Gauntlet

The study also supported earlier studies by showing that there is a significant correlation between college binge drinking and the state's alcohol control policies and the level of resources used to enforce these policies. It was found that the binge drinking rate among college students was 33.1% in the 8 states with 4 or more laws regu-

lating the promotion and sales of high volumes of alcohol, and 48.3% in the states with fewer than 4 such laws.

It's not clear where the actual effect comes from whether it's the individual state laws, the under age drinking rates in high schools, or family influences, but the results are still the same. So before you head out to that next party be aware that your state might just be responsible for the number of students you see acting a fool.

Reference: Nelson TF, Naimi TS, Brewer RD, Wechsler H. The State Sets the Rate: The Relationship Among State-Specific College Binge Drinking, State Binge Drinking Rates, and Selected State Alcohol Control Policies. *Am J Public Health*. 2005;95: 441-446.

# Depression might be Depressing your Grades

By Tommy Babakitis

Depression is a serious disease that affects about 18 million Americans and approximately 15% of college students. College students are at a vulnerable age as well as being faced with numerous college life issues that can lead to depression such as financial difficulties, relationship difficulties, and lifestyle changes. Symptoms include anxiety, sadness, and fatigue, loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities, weight changes, sleep disturbances, and thoughts of suicide. There has been proven to be a direct correlation between the decreased academic performance and depression.<sup>1</sup> To help solve this growing problem, more and more

universities and colleges are making mental-health resources available to students.<sup>2</sup> Psychotherapy or counseling is the most effective treatment and can prevent depression from worsening. Medication is also available. So, if you are entering college and feel the growing pressures around you or have friends that are showing symptoms, realize that this is a problem that affects many and awareness and early treatment are the keys to having a successful and enjoyable college experience.

Reference:

1. Andrew B, Wilding JM, The relation of depression and anxiety to life-stress and achievement in students. *British Journal of Psychology*. 2004;95:



Photo: [www.johnnygoodtimes.com](http://www.johnnygoodtimes.com)

509-521

2. [www.med.umich.edu](http://www.med.umich.edu)[homepage on the Internet]. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Health Systems; c2006[cited 2006 April 23]. Available from: <http://www.med.umich.edu/opm/newspage/2003/collegedepression.htm>

# Don't become another number...

By Jennifer Kelly

Going off to college, being away from home for a long time, staying up as late as you want, having the freedom to do what you want, and the freedom to make your own decisions is what college is all about. Once you decided to go to school you probably also started wondering about your classes. Aren't they going to be big? Will my professors get to know me, or will I become a number? All of this can be very exciting

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for college freshmen studying away from home for the first time. But classes, even in large schools, do not seem so large once you have made a network of friends to share the ebbs and flows of college life with. But having too many classes does not come without a price. We're not talking about trying to turn in your assignments on time to your professors. Nor are we talking about what your parents think you should do. We're

talking about what you learned in elementary school—something that those same “professor-likes” took away from you when you finally made it to middle school... recess. Yes, recess! No, I don't exactly mean dodge-ball, and unfortunately, nor does it involve “nap-time” on the benches of the playground. We're talking about ways to avoid the dreaded ‘Freshman 15’ (or more) when going away to attend college. Simply put, positive caloric intake is the number one reason for weight gain. The roots of the problem are: eating those late night frozen pizzas, grazing on those cookies while studying for your next mid-term, sitting in the library doing research for your next big English paper, and also those late night-movies with brownies and ice cream. This is why it's important that you take at least a little time (and responsibility) out of your week to put the books down. Yes...I'm advocating for you to actually not study. You owe it to yourself to take a well deserved break from campus and dorm life to exercise your body and not your brain! So, if you have a sport

or leisure hobby that you enjoy, find a way to incorporate that into your study-breaks or into your schedule at least 3-4 times a week for at least 30-45 minutes. Or, if you think you have difficulty becoming motivated to do something physical or outdoors, join a club that is involved in things outdoors, or intramurals. Whether it's a short walk with friends, playing a sport, jogging outside, or finding the campus gym, any of these types of activities can help you avoid becoming just another ‘number.’ For more information and tips to avoid the ‘freshman 15,’ please visit: <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/columnnn/n010903.html> for specific tips to help prevent weight gain.

## References:

1. Preidt, R. “Fight Off That Freshman Flab: Research shows college kids can beat back weight gain.” SOURCE: Cornell University, news release, Nov. 22, 2005; Posting date: 17-DEC-2005; Last modified: Sat Dec 17 2005 Available from: <http://www.hon.ch/News/HSN/529359.html>
2. Kendall, P. Eating While Away at College: Tips for Avoiding the “Freshman Fifteen.” 2001 Sept [last updated 2004 Aug 9]. Available from: <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/columnnn/n010903.html>

# Do you know who you're sleeping with?

By Lauren Baggett

Many students encounter problems throughout their college experience, one problem becoming more prevalent is sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Of the STDs which are prevalent in the United States, Chlamydia is the most common. In 2004, it was reported that there were 929,246 cases of diagnosed Chlamydia. This is significant because it shows an increase from the previous year of 877,478 diagnosed cases. However, one of the most common problems associated with Chlamydia may be undiagnosis which can lead to approximately 2.8 million cases of Chlamydia each year. Chlamydia occurs in both men and women; however, it appears to be seen more

in women ( 3.3 times higher) than men simply because women get screened more often. The CDC suggests that sexually active women under the age of 26 should get annual Chlamydia screenings.

Although there is screening for Chlamydia, most men and women do not get screened because of their lack of awareness about the disease. Once Chlamydia is diagnosed it can be treated with antibiotics. Unfortunately, if Chlamydia is untreated it can lead to many health problems. Many women can experience severe health problems such as pelvic inflammatory disease, ectopic pregnancy, and infertility. Sometimes if untreated, men can also experience

**“Of the sexually transmitted diseases which are prevalent in the United States, Chlamydia is the most common. “**

health problems such as epididymitis, and urethritis, which can lead to pain, fever, and possibly sterility. In conclusion, the incidence of Chlamydia is an ever growing disease, however it can be reduced if both young men and women get screened and practice safe sex.

Reference: Center for Disease Control and Prevention [Homepage on the Internet]. Trends in Reportable Sexually Transmitted Diseases in the United States. 2004. Available from: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/stats/trends2004.htm>