

## **“I think we’d try and delay it, and try and deflect it or wait for another day”:** Parental views about supply of alcohol to adolescents

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**Introduction / Issues:** Parental supply of alcohol to adolescents is associated with earlier alcohol initiation, higher levels of future risky drinking and health harms. Despite these risks, parental beliefs and practices in Australia are inconsistent with evidence, and most parents believe they should introduce alcohol at home before 18. This study investigated parents’ decision-making regarding alcohol supply and non-supply to adolescents, and experiences that may have shaped their perspectives.

**Method / Approach:** Semi-structured individual video interviews were conducted with 40 parents/guardians of adolescents ( $n=20$  parents/guardians of ‘younger adolescents’ aged 12-15, and  $n=20$  of ‘older adolescents’ aged 16-17) from three Australian states. Purposive sampling ensured approximately even numbers of mothers and fathers (43% male). Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically.

**Key Findings:** Parents described reactive approaches to discussing ‘safe’ alcohol consumption with adolescents, often delayed until prompted by adolescents or when they reached ‘the right age’, when drinking was considered developmentally appropriate. Few had proactively sought alcohol-related information or initiated discussions with other parents, reflecting the pressures of hesitancy to ‘judge’ other parents’ approaches and provision consistent with adolescents’ peers. Parents’ own drinking experiences to avoid intoxication in adolescence/early adulthood often informed supply approaches (e.g., beverage quantities and types with lower perceived harm), and the harm minimisation strategies they supported (e.g., consumption around ‘responsible’ peers). Communication strategies reinforcing non-supply decisions and benefits of adolescent abstinence, delivered to parents via social media and school-based sources, were frequently endorsed.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Supply decisions may be influenced by adolescents’ relative age and perceived developmental stage, other parents’ approaches, and parents’ own alcohol-related experiences.

**Implications for Practice or Policy:** Findings support the development of resources to prompt earlier age-appropriate communication with adolescents and other parents, and further promotion of Australian drinking guidelines for people under 18 years, to prevent parental supply of alcohol.

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