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Public Links 'Alcopops' to Underage Drinking

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C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health finds 92% of adults support warning labels, 84% support marketing restrictions for flavored alcoholic beverages

ANN ARBOR, Mich., April 6 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Opening a tall cool beverage during the ball game or at a backyard cookout on a hot day is what families do. This summer, will your child be opening a soft drink or a hard one? Flavored alcoholic beverages - or alcopops - are becoming more popular, especially among young people, and it's raising people's concerns about underage drinking.

According to a report released today, 52 percent of adults believe definitely or probably that alcopops encourage underage drinking. The report also finds that because these often fruity, fizzy, pop-like drinks can be easily confused with non-alcoholic beverages, 92 percent of adults strongly support the use of warning labels on alcopops. Most adults also support greater restrictions on advertising that focuses on youth.

"Alcopops are sweet drinks made to taste like cola or soda pop or punch or lemonade," says Matthew Davis, M.D., director of the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health. "Typically, alcopops have between 5- and 8-percent alcohol content, which is a little bit more than most beers, and they're marketed to look like familiar drinks to kids."

What many people may not know is that most alcopops contain distilled alcohol - such as vodka or whiskey - but are classified in most states as "malt beverages" similar to beer. This designation allows alcopops to be marketed more widely, including online and in magazines, and sold in a greater number of retail locations.

"We also found in this poll that about 75-percent of adults in the United States are concerned underage drinking is a problem," Davis says. "Underage drinking in the U.S. is pretty common. About 20-percent of 8th graders and 40-percent of 12th graders drink. Those numbers are actually lower than in the mid-'90's but they're still high when you consider the problems that can come from underage drinking."

Problems may include legal risks associated with underage drinking, driving while under the influence, impaired judgment, poor decision-making when out drinking with friends, and developing a drinking habit while young, Davis says.

The National Poll on Children's Health also finds, among adults:

- 84 percent support banning alcopops ads from youth Web sites
- 80 percent support banning alcopops ads from youth magazines
- 75 percent support banning alcopops billboards from within 500 feet of a school or park
- 59 percent support banning alcopops ads during primetime television
- 58 percent support prohibiting alcopops sponsoring college sporting events
- 57 percent support limiting alcopops ads during televised sporting events

"There is a lot of action in state legislatures regarding alcopops or flavored alcoholic beverages," Davis says. "Many states are considering legislation and some have enacted legislation to limit advertising and otherwise check back

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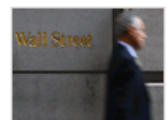
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Some have enacted legislation to limit advertising and otherwise change how alcohol ads are presented to the public."

Resource for parents:

For parents who are worried about their kids getting involved with alcohol, Davis suggests parents contact the Partnership for a Drug Free America, www.drugfree.org. The Web site provides information, including suggestions about how to engage their kids in conversations about alcohol use and how to try and bring kids in for appropriate therapy and support.

Methodology:

For its report, the National Poll on Children's Health used data from a national online survey conducted in January 2009 in collaboration with Knowledge Networks, Inc. The survey was administered to a random sample of 2,100 adults, ages 21 and older, who are a part of Knowledge Network's online KnowledgePanel(R). The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect U.S. population figures from the U.S. Census Bureau. About three-fourths of the sample included households with children. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2 to 4 percentage points, depending on the question.

To learn more about Knowledge Networks, visit www.knowledgenetworks.com.

Purpose/Funding:

The C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health - funded by the Department of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases and part of the CHEAR Unit at the U-M Health System - is designed to measure major health care issues and trends for U.S. children.

SOURCE U-M C.S. Mott Children's Hospital

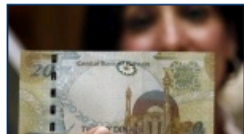
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