

Young women at risk of 'drunkorexia'

By [Hayley Hannan](#)

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An increasing number of young women are starving themselves for days before drinking to keep their calorie intake levels down, says an expert.

"Drunkorexia" was on the rise in Kiwi women aged 18–30, said Eating Difficulties Education Network counsellor Victoria Marsden.

"Drunkorexia is characterised by mostly restricting the day before, the day of, and the day after going out drinking.

"Restricting meaning skipping meals, not eating at all or eating very little to counterbalance or contradict the calories that alcohol contains."

Ms Marsden said women were also vomiting to try to stay slim.

"A lot of it is being influenced by the culture we live in – with young women having to fit an ideal body image."

She said women could be damaging their health and their safety.

"There are some really concerning aspects of it, particularly if someone has been restricting or starving themselves and then drinks a significant amount of alcohol. They can find themselves drunk very quickly and then in unsafe situations."

Ms Marsden said the problem was "definitely growing".

"We live in a culture where binge drinking is such a significant part of young people's lives; often it's under-reported or not reported at all. Lots of young women just see it as part of going out, and it spills over into the next day with restricting [food]."

A University of Missouri study into the issue found 16 per cent of those surveyed restricted calories to save them for drinking.

Co-author Victoria Osborne found "drunkorexics" were more at risk from violence, risky sexual behaviour, alcohol poisoning, substance abuse and chronic diseases later in life.

Alcohol Healthwatch adviser Chris Rogan said more research was needed on women forgoing food to drink alcohol.

"We have very little research on any of the less-obvious harm that comes from alcohol. ... There's a huge iceberg of problems out there, and [drunkorexia] is one of them."

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Drunkorexia on the rise. Photo / Supplied