

Parents 'in denial' on their binge-drinking

MILLIONS of British parents are in denial over their binge-drinking, according to a study.

Researchers used a newly-developed technique to measure alcohol intake by analysing tell-tale chemical traces in hair.

While eight out of ten parents taking part claimed they drank less than the alcohol misuse limit of 60g of alcohol per day – equivalent to five or six drinks – in reality 43 per cent of samples showed otherwise.

Of those who were drinking too much, more than half were in denial – with 56 per cent wrongly claiming their drinking was within safe bounds.

The findings come amid controversy over the alleged level of alcohol consumption among the middle classes, with millions said to consider it normal to drink two or more bottles of wine at home at night.

Reports have highlighted grave dangers to health from sustained heavy drinking, claiming that high levels of hazardous consumption are commonest in the most well-off areas, such as the suburban Home Counties.

While weekend binge drinking among youths has been the main

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focus of concern until now, the latest research covered a sample of 200 parents of young children, with an average age of 33.

Each submitted a hair sample for analysis, allowing laboratory staff to gauge their average alcohol intake over six months – unlike blood or urine tests, which can measure drinking only over the past few hours.

Similar techniques have long been used to test for illegal drugs, but the equivalent alcohol test became available only in recent months. They are already being used by courts hearing child custody cases where children are alleged to be at risk because of a parent's alcoholism.

Rosie Frappola, of Trimega Laboratories, which carried out the tests, said: 'Many people tend to underestimate their alcohol intake, particularly if they drink strong beers or wine and have large wine glasses.

'Increasingly people are opening a bottle of wine instead of making a pot of tea.'