

is frequently reported.

In one study in one district, almost 40% of healthcare staff experienced lower back pain, with risk factors including repeated lifting, bending, and long hours standing or in awkward positions.

YOUNG ADULTS OF 20-35 YEARS

This is one of the most affected age groups in Uganda. People in their 20s and early 30s often juggle physically demanding tasks, sedentary office work, and long travel times, which strain the back.

...to contain vibration and poor seat support. Farmers bend and lift repeatedly. Office workers sit for long hours with poor back support.

Local research also suggests that poor posture, workplace ergonomics, stress, sleep quality, and previous injuries contribute to back pain among young adults.

...in this age group, breadwinner's back pain can become chronic and recurrent. Wear and tear of spinal discs, early arthritis, and poor lifelong body mechanics contribute to pain. The middle-aged may notice pain that radiates down the legs, flares after prolonged sitting or standing and interferes with sleep.

Several studies show that women, including Ugandan women, tend to report back pain more often than men. This may reflect a combination of biological, social and work-related factors, including care-giving roles, repetitive home tasks, and limited access to ergonomic supports

Q: Dear Counsellor, What makes women to binge drink? Can female hormones cause alcoholism in women? I took my wife for treatment at a rehab for alcoholism, but she keeps relapsing and binge drinking at the end of the month with her female friends. A friend told me that it's because their hormones are high at that time.

Jude, Mbale

Do female hormones cause alcoholism in women?

A: Dear Jude, I would like to thank you for having taken your wife into treatment for alcoholism, and for continuing to be supportive, despite her relapses. Relapse after treatment for addiction is quite common and can be simply a part of the recovery process. But it

is also possible for female hormones to influence one's drinking habits.

According to a recent study, women are more likely to binge drink when they have higher levels of estrogen.

The study, which was carried out by scientists at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York, discovered women's relationship to binge drinking is associated with their estrogen levels, in that the hormone causes them to consume large amounts of alcohol in their first half an hour of drinking.

The study, which was published in the journal *Natures Communications* in 2024, discovered for the first time that estrogen influences men and women's different approaches to binge

**BREAK
FREE**
with OSCAR
BAMUHIGIRE

drinking. Dr Kristen Pleil, a senior author of the study, and associate professor of pharmacology, said: "Estrogen has such powerful effects on so many behaviours, particularly in females. So, it makes sense that it would also modulate drinking."

This finding is very important because according to her, so little is known about "what drives alcohol drinking behaviour

in females because most studies of alcohol use have been done in males".

During the study, researchers looked at hormone levels during the cycles of female mice before giving them alcohol, and they found that female mice drink much more when they have high levels of estrogen than on days when they have low estrogen.

But there are other

factors that also influence female drinking behaviour. Dr Pleil and her team in a previous study published in 2021 in the journal *Nature Communications* found that neurons in a brain region named the bed nucleus of the stria terminalis were more excitable in female mice than in their male counterparts - and this was directly linked to their binge drinking.

"When a female takes her first sip from the bottle containing alcohol, those neurons go crazy," Dr Pleil said. "And if she's in a high-estrogen state, they go even crazier."

Researchers said the study could open up new ways of treating alcoholism, because controlling estrogen could curb alcohol consumption when hormone levels rise.



A woman looking at alcohol. Medical studies in New York revealed that when a female takes her first sip of alcohol, her neurons go crazy