

Children of alcoholics slower at switching from one task to another, study suggests

One of the strongest predictors of becoming an alcoholic is family history: the offspring of people with the disorder are four times more likely than others to develop it, according to the [National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism \(NIAAA\)](#). But new research shows a family history of [alcoholism](#) (FHA) affects more than your desire to drink. It also changes how your brain transitions from one task to the next.

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Additional investigations are also needed to answer why people with FHA switch between activity and rest in a different way—and whether there may be a genetic basis for its occurrence.

The ability to switch seamlessly from a relatively demanding task (balancing a checkbook) to a less demanding one (binge-watching a TV show that you have already seen) is critical to going about our everyday activities, explains Reza Momenan, director of the Clinical NeuroImaging Research Core at NIAAA, who was not involved with the research. Carrying out this transition smoothly, Momenan says, helps the nervous system remain in a stable equilibrium state needed for survival. This type of research could provide the basis for better diagnoses for psychiatric disorders than simply interviewing patients to determine the risk, severity or prognosis for alcohol use disorder.

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