



Pathway to Prevention

teen use & abuse stops here

In this Issue:

- Underage drinking statistics
- Early drinking can be deadly
- Drinking prevention tips
- Underage drinking red flags

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Parent Awareness Report

Underage Drinking

In spite of recent declines in teen alcohol consumption, alcohol remains the number one drug of choice for America's young people, and the percentage of teens who drink increases by grade. The 2014 *Monitoring the Future* study found that:

- Over a quarter of students have consumed more than just a few sips of alcohol by the 8th grade.
- Two out of every three students have consumed more than just a few sips of alcohol by the end of high school.
- Half of 12th graders and one in nine 8th graders reported having been drunk at least once in their life.
- Among 12th graders, 20% reported having five or more drinks on the same occasion in rapid succession within the prior two week period.

The consequences of early drinking can be catastrophic:

- More young people die from alcohol-related suicide, homicide or accident than all other drugs combined.
- Because of the way the brain develops during the teen and young adult years, those who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop chemical dependency on alcohol than those who begin at age 21. Kids do not set out to become alcoholics, but for those with the genetic predisposition towards alcohol dependence, that first experiment with a fruity, fun wine or sweet after-dinner drink can set the stage for a lifetime of chemical dependency.

Here's advice from the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug

Dependence to reduce the chances your teen will consume alcohol at an early age:

- *Perceived risk* and *social acceptance* are the top two factors in whether kids decide to try drugs or alcohol. If kids understand the risks of using drugs (including alcohol) and they see using them as socially unacceptable, they are less likely to try drugs.

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- Make sure kids have the facts about the risks of underage drinking before they start high school. Teens may start experimenting with alcohol or drugs as early as age 10 or 11.
- If you consume alcohol as a parent, make sure you set a good example of responsible drinking. Drink moderately, don't drink and drive, and lock up the alcohol in your home.
- Establish clear family rules about alcohol and other drugs. Here are some ideas:
 - Kids will not ride in a car with someone who has been drinking or using drugs.
 - Older brothers and sisters will not encourage younger kids to drink or use drugs.
 - Kids under 21 will not host parties at our home without parental supervision
 - Kids will not stay at a party where alcohol or drugs are present.
 - Parents will talk with the “sleepover” parent to confirm they will be home that night.

Red flags that your child may be using alcohol:

- Eyes that are bloodshot, or using eye drops to mask bloodshot eyes.
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns. Sudden weight loss or weight gain. Deterioration in personal grooming or physical appearance.
- Impaired coordination, or injuries/accidents/bruises that they won't tell you about or can't remember how they occurred.
- Shakes, tremors, incoherent or slurred speech, impaired or unstable coordination. Seizures without a history of epilepsy.
- Skipping class, declining grades, getting in trouble at school; getting into fights.
- Unexplained or frequent car accidents or “dings.”
- Acting isolated, silent, withdrawn, engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviors. Changes in relationships, friends, favorite hangouts and hobbies.
- Preoccupation with alcohol and drug-related lifestyle in music, clothing and posters.
- Demanding more privacy, locking doors and avoiding eye contact.
- Lack of motivation; inability to focus; lethargic or “spaced out” appearance.



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