


**Underage drinking is
an American epidemic.**

ALCOHOL



Children are feeling pressure to try drinking at very young ages. One third of 4th graders report feeling pressured by friends to drink. By 6th grade, more than half report feeling that pressure. One study found that more than half of the 5- to 12-year-olds felt advertising encourages them to drink.

WHY SHOULD YOU ENCOURAGE YOUR KIDS NOT TO DRINK?

Aside from the fact that it's illegal for minors to consume alcohol, drinking poses a serious threat to the health and safety of young people.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL WITH DRINKING?

Alcohol Poisoning

If your child drinks too much alcohol over a short period of time, it can put them in a coma or kill them. This senseless tragedy is a growing problem on college campuses.

Organ Damage and Cancer

Alcohol can severely damage your child's liver and affect brain development. It's absorbed directly into the bloodstream and can increase risk for a variety of life-threatening diseases, including cancer.

Impaired Judgment

With their ongoing brain development, teenagers are already naturally impulsive and limited in their ability to make good judgments. Alcohol makes the situation worse. It causes people to have less self-control, fewer inhibitions and further impairs good judgment.

Sexual Activity

Engaging in sexual activity is associated with adolescent alcohol use. Boys who start drinking or smoking at a young age are 40% more likely to start having sex. Many young women say they used alcohol

(or were drunk) when they first had sex. In one study of unplanned pregnancies in 14-21 year-olds, one third of the girls who had become pregnant had been drinking when they had sex; 91% of them reported that the sex was unplanned.

Sexual Assault

Sexual assault (including rape) occurs most commonly among women in late adolescence and early adulthood, usually on a "date." In one survey, approximately 10% of female high school students reported having been raped. Research suggests that alcohol use by the offender, the victim, or both, increases the likelihood of sexual assault by a male acquaintance.

Suicide

Alcohol interacts with conditions such as depression and stress to contribute to suicide, the third leading cause of death among people between the ages of 14 and 25. In one study, 37% of 8th grade females who drank heavily reported attempting suicide, compared to 11% who did not drink.

Drinking and Driving

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among 15- to 20-year-olds. Given their relative lack of driving

CONSIDER THIS:

If the teen brain is undergoing a major growth process that is critical for maturity, imagine the devastating impact that drugs and alcohol may have if they interfere with the developmental process!

college, where the rates are significantly higher than high school. More than 60% of college men and almost 50% of college women who are frequent binge drinkers report that they drink and drive.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Make the Home Safe

To discourage underage drinking, restrict access to the alcohol in your home. Either limit yourself to consuming alcohol when eating out with other adults or put a lock on the cabinet where you store liquor. Never make alcohol easy to get for your teens, especially when you're not home.

Never Allow Kids to Drink in Your Home

Some parents are foolishly choosing to allow drinking in their home under the belief that it's safer to let teens drink "under their watch." This is both an illegal practice and a dangerous endorsement of underage drinking to your kids and their friends.

THE TEEN BRAIN: IT'S STILL GROWING

For years it's been widely believed that the human brain was largely a "finished product" by the time a child reaches the age of 12. In terms of size, it's true that the brain is done growing by then. But recent studies have shown that "underneath the hood," there's a complex development process underway. One of the last regions of the brain to mature is called the pre-frontal cortex. It's the part of the mind responsible for things like setting priorities, suppressing impulses, weighing consequences and organizing thoughts. In other words, your teens may look like young adults on the outside, but their brains are still a long way off from maturity (experts now say that doesn't occur until the mid 20s)!

Given the developmental limitations of the teen mind, it's critical that parents provide persistent guidance, boundaries and support to their adolescents. It's simply unfair (and dangerous) to expect your teen to think like an adult; they're simply not yet equipped to do so.

experience, adolescents are already at increased risk. Drivers under 21 years of age are more susceptible than older drivers to the alcohol-induced impairment of driving skills. The rate of fatal crashes among alcohol-involved drivers between 16 and 20 years old is more than double the rate for alcohol-involved drivers 21 and older.

Addiction

Early alcohol use may have long-lasting consequences. People who start drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence at some time in their lives compared with those who have their first drink at age 20 or older. Children of alcoholics are more likely to begin drinking during adolescence.

Binge Drinking

Binge drinking is consuming five or more drinks in a row for boys and four or more in a row for girls. The motivation is to intentionally get drunk. About 10.4 million adolescents ages 12 to 20 reported using alcohol. Of those, 5.1 million were binge drinkers and this included 2.3 million heavy drinkers who binged at least 5 times a month. Binge drinking during high school, especially among males, is strongly predictive of binge drinking in

WHO'S BEEN DRINKING AND WHEN?

12-17 Year-Olds

- ➔ The average age when youth first try alcohol is 11 for boys and 13 for girls.
- ➔ Girls are as likely as boys to drink alcohol.
- ➔ The average age at which Americans begin drinking regularly is 15.9 years old.
- ➔ 13% had at least one serious problem related to drinking in the past year.

High School Seniors

- ➔ 80% have used alcohol
- ➔ 64% have been drunk
- ➔ 53% drank alcohol in the past month
- ➔ 34% got drunk in the past month
- ➔ 4% drink every day

College Students

- ➔ 40% are binge drinkers