

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF UNDERAGE DRINKING

- Age of first consumption is linked to development of alcohol dependence. If a person first consumes alcohol at age 13, there is a 47.3%, at age 16, 30.6% and at age 21, 10.0% chance that the individual will become alcohol dependent during his or her life. * * National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
- Youth may become alcohol dependent in 6 months to 3 years vs. the 10-15 year pattern it may take for an adult to become an alcoholic.
- The majority of adolescents who begin drinking between 13 and 16 will progress to other drugs.
- Alcohol consumption may delay the onset of puberty and cause slow bone growth.
- Heavy drinking can cause impotence in males and complications with hormonal cycles in females.
- Alcohol and drug use lower inhibition for sexual activity, increasing unwanted pregnancies, individual and gang rape, and sexually transmitted diseases.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF UNDERAGE DRINKING

- The frontal region of the brain (the judgment region) is very sensitive to alcohol. This region of the brain is not functionally mature in adolescents. When an adolescent consumes alcohol, inhibitors are relaxed, causing thoughtless, impulsive and often irrational behavior.
- Alcohol shrinks memory signals, reduces memory acquisition and harms the ability to learn at much lower dosages in adolescent brains than in adult brains.
- Youth who use substances are at higher risk than nonusers for mental health problems, including depression, conduct problems, personality disorders, suicidal thoughts, attempted suicide, and suicide.

CHILDREN'S IMAGES OF ALCOHOL

- Young people report more positive feelings about their own likelihood to drink after viewing ads on television.
- Media messages about alcohol present glamorous images and ignore the risks associated with underage drinking.
- Children begin to acquire alcohol expectancies at a very young age (3 to 4 years old). In early childhood, alcohol expectancies tend to be negative (e.g., alcohol makes one sick, mean, and argumentative).
- By fifth and sixth grade, these expectancies turn positive, focusing on the arousing and positive effects of alcohol use (e.g., alcohol makes one social, happy, and sexy).

Talk with your child early and frequently about the health, legal and social effects of alcohol and other drugs

RISK FACTORS

- Peer acceptance and the lack of perception of harm related to the use of alcohol and other drugs have been identified as important risk factors.
- Lack of clear parental boundaries, monitoring, and communication have been significantly related to underage drinking and drug use.
- Inconsistent messages and unclear boundaries about the use of alcohol and other drugs through all community sectors decreases healthy development among children and youth.
- The characteristics of restlessness, impulsivity, and aggressiveness in children as young as 3 have been found to predict alcohol and other drug use in adolescence.

LEGAL CONSEQUENCES

- You cannot give alcohol to your children's friends under 21 years of age under any circumstances, even in your own home with their parents' permission.
- You cannot knowingly allow a person under 21 to remain in your home or on your property while consuming or possessing alcoholic beverages.
- If you break the law, you can face a maximum sentence of six months in jail and/or a \$1,000 fine.

WEBSITES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org

American Medical Association
www.ama-assn.org

Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free
www.alcoholfreechildren.org

Mothers Against Drunk Driving
www.madd.org/home

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse
www.niaaa.nih.gov

Northeast Community Challenge Coalition
www.necchealthycommunity.org

ONDCP National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign
www.mediacampaign.org

Too Smart To Start
www.toosmarttostart.samhsa.gov

Youth Sites

Above the Influence
www.abovetheinfluence.com

The Cool Spot
www.thecoolspot.gov

National Institute on Drug Abuse
www.teens.drugabuse.gov

National Youth Antidrug Media Campaign
www.freevibe.com

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