

**underage**  
**DRINKING**



**NOT A MINOR PROBLEM**

**TOOLKIT FOR PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS & CAREGIVERS**

**RISK FACTORS/WARNING SIGNS**

**WHAT YOU CAN DO/PREVENTION**

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**TALKING TO YOUR KIDS**

**RESOURCES**

# RISK FACTORS



*Youth at highest risk for alcohol-related problems are those who:*

- Begin using alcohol or other drugs before age 15
- Have a parent who is a problem drinker or alcoholic
- Have close friends who use alcohol and/or other drugs
- Have been aggressive, antisocial or hard to control from an early age
- Have experienced behavioral problems and/or are failing at school
- Have parents who do not support them, do not communicate openly with them and do not set realistic boundaries for them
- Are experiencing anxiety, depression or some other mental health issue
- Have parents with favorable attitudes toward alcohol and drugs
- Lack parental support, monitoring and communication

*Source: [www.toosmartostart.samhsa.gov](http://www.toosmartostart.samhsa.gov); <http://youth.gov/youth-topics/substance-abuse/risk-and-protective-factors-substance-use-abuse-and-dependence>*

## WARNING SIGNS

*Although the following may indicate a problem with alcohol or other drugs, some also reflect normal teenage growing pains. Experts believe that a drinking problem is more likely if you notice several of these signs at the same time, if they occur suddenly and if some of them are extreme in nature.*

- Mood changes: flare-ups of temper, irritability and defensiveness
- School problems: poor attendance, low grades, and/or recent disciplinary action
- Rebellion against family rules
- Friend changes: switching friends and a reluctance to have you get to know the new friends
- A “nothing matters” attitude: sloppy appearance, lack of involvement in former interests and general low energy
- Alcohol presence: finding it in your child’s room or backpack or smelling alcohol on his or her breath
- Physical or mental problems: memory lapses, poor concentration, bloodshot eyes, lack of coordination or slurred speech

*Source: [www.toosmartostart.samhsa.gov](http://www.toosmartostart.samhsa.gov)*

# RISK FACTORS/WARNING SIGNS

# WHAT YOU CAN DO/PREVENTION



## Set standards.

- Set clear rules and let your child know drinking is not acceptable.
- Tell your child, “I do not want you drinking until you are 21,” and explain that the brain is still developing until the age of 25.
- Share your standards with family and your child’s friends’ parents.
- Enforce the rules you set.
- Make sure alcohol isn’t available at teen parties in your home.

## Be a positive role model.

- If you drink yourself, drink responsibly. That means not drinking too much or too often. Your children are watching, listening and learning.
- Stay away from alcohol in high-risk situations. For example, don’t drive or go boating when you’ve been drinking.
- Get help if you think you have an alcohol-related problem.
- Do not give alcohol to your teens. Tell them that any alcohol in your home is off limits to them and to their friends.

## Support your children and teens and give them space to grow.

- Be involved in your teens’ lives. Be loving and caring.
- Encourage your teens’ growing independence, but set appropriate limits.
- Make it easy for your teens to share information about their lives.
- Know where your teens are, what they are doing, who they are with and who their friends are.
- Find ways for your teens to be involved in family life, such as by doing chores or caring for a younger brother or sister.
- Set clear rules, including rules about alcohol use. Enforce the rules you set.
- Help your teens find ways to have fun without alcohol.
- Don’t let your teens attend parties where alcohol is served.
- Help your teens avoid dangerous situations such as riding in a car driven by someone who has been drinking.
- Help your teens get professional help if you’re worried about their involvement with alcohol.

Source: Office of the Surgeon General. (2007) *The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking: A Guide for Families* (PDF 889KB) Rockville, MD: Department of Health and Human Services.

# DID YOU KNOW?



- Alcohol is the most commonly used and abused drug among youth in the United States.
- It is illegal for a person under the age of 21 to consume alcohol, have any bodily alcohol content or have alcohol in their possession.
- You are legally responsible if you give alcohol to a minor and they, in turn, hurt someone, hurt themselves or damage property.
- Providing alcohol to a minor is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine up to \$1,000 and up to 90 days in jail.
- Providing alcohol to a minor, where the consumption of the alcohol is a direct cause of the person's death, is a felony punishable by a fine up to \$5,000 or up to 10 years imprisonment or both.
- People who first use alcohol before age 15 are four times more likely to become addicted to alcohol at some time in their lives than are those who have their first drink at age 20 or older.
  
- 90% of Americans with a substance abuse problem started smoking, drinking or using other drugs before age 18.
- The brain is developing until the age of 25. Early exposure to alcohol can interrupt critical brain development, including memory, ability to learn new things and hold onto knowledge, impulse control, and emotional maturity.
- On average, underage drinkers consume more drinks per drinking occasion than adult drinkers.
- Each year, approximately 5,000 people under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking. This includes about 1,900 deaths from car accidents, 1,600 homicides, 300 suicides and hundreds of other deaths due to accidents like falls, burns and drownings.
- Teens say that they rely on adults in their lives more than anyone else to help them make tough decisions and to provide good advice.

Source: [abovetheinfluence.com/drugs/alcohol/#facts](http://abovetheinfluence.com/drugs/alcohol/#facts)

Source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking*. Published March 2007. Retrieved October 2011.

Source: [Toosmartostart.samhsa.gov/families](http://Toosmartostart.samhsa.gov/families)

## DID YOU KNOW?

# TALKING TO YOUR KIDS



*Conversations can be a powerful tool parents can use to connect with and protect kids. Take advantage of every opportunity to engage, listen and make sure your rules are clear.*

## Relate it to what's happening at school.

"Do you guys talk about alcohol at school?"

"Have you ever seen someone from your school drunk?"

## Tell a story from your own life and acknowledge the consequences.

"Did I ever tell you about that time..."

"Haven't I told you about my friend..."

"When I was a teen, some kids had fake IDs. Have you ever seen that?"

## Share the facts. Show you care enough to have done your homework.

"I read that 1 in 10 kids your age are drinking. I know it might not be you, but it may be happening with your friends and with people you know. So what do you think about kids your age drinking?"

"Did you know it only takes one standard drink to begin to feel impaired?"

## Praise their good judgment and reinforce all the positive things they do.

"Thanks for being a good friend to \_\_\_\_\_, they need to see it's just as cool not to drink. You're a good role model and I'm proud of you."

"I'm really proud of the good choices you have been making."

## Ask about a party or event. Find out what they're doing. Make sure they know your expectations.

"Your going to your friend's party this weekend? Let's talk about what to watch out for."

"Did you have fun at the party? What did you guys do?"

## Comment on a commercial or TV show.

"Do kids really drink like that these days?"

"Why do you think kids drink alcohol?"

Discuss commercials and help them understand they are marketing to adults, not youth.

## Talk about the latest local news. Use real-world examples to explain the dangers and consequences.

"Hey, I heard about... What do you think about that?"

"Did you hear about what happened to...?"

"My coworker's son..."

Source: [TalkItOutNC.org](http://TalkItOutNC.org)

## GENERAL TIPS

- When you talk with your children about drinking, listen to them and respect what they say.
- Make clear your expectation that your children will not drink.
- Teach your children about the dangers of underage drinking.
- Discuss laws about underage drinking, including the age 21 law.

**Talk Early. Talk Often.**  
**TalkSooner.org**

**TS** [talksooner.org/apps](http://talksooner.org/apps)



# RESOURCES



## The Partnership for Drug-Free Kids

[drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org)

## Oakland Community Health Network

(248) 858-1210 • [oaklandchn.org](http://oaklandchn.org)

## Mental Health and Substance Use Access Services

(248) 464-6363 non-emergency

## Common Ground

Resource & Crisis Helpline • (800) 231-1127

## National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

[drugabuse.gov](http://drugabuse.gov)

## Talk Sooner: Helping Parents Prevent Youth Substance Abuse

[talksooner.org/drugs/alcohol](http://talksooner.org/drugs/alcohol)

## NIDA for Teens

[teens.drugabuse.gov](http://teens.drugabuse.gov)

## Stop Underage Drinking

[stopalcoholabuse.gov](http://stopalcoholabuse.gov)



## About The Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities

*The Alliance is a network of over nineteen community prevention coalitions serving 55+ local communities. The Alliance is comprised of individuals and organizations who share our commitment to building healthy and drug-free communities.*



## Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities

(248) 221-7101 • [achcmi.org](http://achcmi.org)

## MYTH

Teens need to drink to fit in, because all the other kids drink alcohol.

## FACT

If teens really want to fit in, they should stay sober. Most young people don't drink alcohol. Research shows that almost 75 percent of 12 to 20-year-olds have not used any alcohol during the last month.

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## MYTH

Adults drink, so kids should be able to drink, too.

## FACT

Drinking alcohol has a negative impact on a young person's developing brain and body. Research shows that people who start drinking before the age of 15 are 4 times more likely to meet the criteria for alcohol dependence at some point in their lives.

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## MYTH

Youth can drink alcohol and not have any problems.

## FACT

If someone is under 21, drinking alcohol is a big problem: It's illegal. If caught, they may have to pay a fine, perform community service or take alcohol awareness classes. Kids who drink also are more likely to get poor grades in school and are at higher risk for being a crime victim.

