

Preventing Underage Alcohol Use

A Discussion Guide for Adults



6 Facts and Discussion Questions

The headlines appear too often: “High School Student Dies Driving Drunk.” “Police Break up Teenage Kegger while Parents Are Away.” “Drunk Student Sent Home from School.” Has alcohol become part of youth culture? Use the tips below to talk with other parents about preventing underage alcohol use.

Research Findings

1. The number one drug of choice for 12- to 17-year-olds is alcohol.¹
2. One out of six teenagers who has used alcohol admits to having a blackout where they have consumed so much alcohol that they couldn't remember the events around the time of their drinking.²
3. About half of all teenage and college-age assaults (and rapes) involve alcohol.³
4. Eleven percent of the alcohol consumed in the United States is by underage drinkers.⁴
5. One out of four teenagers admits to binge drinking.⁵
6. Kids who start drinking alcohol before age 15 are five times more likely to develop alcohol abuse or alcohol dependency later in life compared with kids who begin drinking at or after age 21.⁶

Sources

1. American Academy of Pediatrics, *Caring for Your Teenager* (New York: Bantam Books, 2003), 256.
2. Ibid., 262.
3. Ibid.
4. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Drinking in America: Myths, Realities, and Prevention Policy* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2005).
5. D. K. Eaton, L. Kann., S.A. Kinchen, et. al., “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2007,” *CDC Morbidity Mortality Surveillance Summary 2008*, 1-131.
6. R. W. Hingson, T. Heeren, M. R. Winter, “Age at Drinking Onset and Alcohol Dependence: Age at Onset, Duration, and Severity,” *Pediatrics*, 2006, 160, 739-746.

Take It Further

ParentFurther discussion guides are created to help you talk with your kids about tough topics. Visit www.ParentFurther.com for more discussion guides and additional resources.

Discussion Points

- **How big of a problem do you think underage drinking is?**
- **Which mixed messages do kids receive about underage drinking?**
- **Why do you think alcohol is the number one drug of choice for kids?**
- **Why do you think so many teenagers who drink alcohol end up binge drinking?**
- **How do the schools in your community deal with underage drinking?**
- **What can we do to stop underage drinking?**

Underage alcohol use is a fact of life; but by educating your child early and building a strong parenting network that is committed to preventing underage drinking, you can help your child (and the children of other parents) be prepared to make positive decisions when confronted with alcohol.