



What to Tell Them

Your children need information to make good decisions. Don't wait until a problem arises to talk to them about drinking alcohol.

About the body:

- With the first sip of alcohol, the drinker is affected.
- Alcohol moves through the bloodstream to every organ in the body, including the brain.
- Once alcohol enters the brain, it changes the way a person behaves. People do things they would not normally do. The ability to make good decisions is affected.
- The drinker also may lose balance and be unable to see or speak clearly. The more alcohol a person drinks, the worse the effects are.
- Alcohol can have lasting effects on the brain, impairing how a person learns, thinks, and remembers.
- Alcohol can kill. If a person drinks heavily in a short period of time, alcohol poisoning can occur. A person can vomit, pass out, or even die.
- Some people get addicted to alcohol.

About peers:

- Children often think that other people their age are drinking regularly, but most are not.
- Alcohol can hurt your child—even if he or she is not the one drinking. If your child is around people who are drinking, he or she has an increased risk of being seriously injured or affected by violence. At the very least, your child may have to deal with someone who is sick, out of control, or unable to take care of themselves.
- As children get older, some of their friends may start drinking, and may get into trouble from drinking too much. Tell your child that there is help for people who have alcohol problems. It is OK to get help.

About the law:

- It is illegal for anyone to buy or possess alcohol until 21 years of age.
- Even one drink can cause a person to lose their driver's license.

This information was adapted from *Start Talking Before They Start Drinking Family Guide* published by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Human Services Administration.

For the complete **Family Guide** go to www.stopalcoholabuse.gov and click on Parents.



Washington State
Liquor Control Board
www.liq.wa.gov/education.asp



What You Should Know



Many kids start drinking in middle school:

- One out of every two 8th graders has tried alcohol.
- More kids use alcohol than use tobacco or illicit drugs.
- More children are killed by alcohol than all illegal drugs combined.
- Children who begin drinking alcohol before the age of 15 are 5 times more likely to develop alcohol problems than those who start after age 21.

The teenage brain is still developing. Alcohol impairs:

- Motor coordination. This includes the ability to walk, drive, and process information.
- Impulse control. Drinking lowers inhibitions and increases the chances that young people will do something that they would not do if they haven't been drinking.
- Memory. Impaired recollection and blackouts can occur when too much alcohol has been consumed.
- Judgment and decision making capacity. Drinking may lead young people to engage in risky behaviors that can result in illness, injury, and even death.

Other risks of underage drinking:

- **Violence.** Children who start drinking before age 15 are 12 times more likely to be injured while under the influence of alcohol and 10 times more likely to be in a fight after drinking, compared with those who wait until they are 21.
- **Sexual activity.** Alcohol use by teens is a strong predictor of both sexual activity and unprotected sex. A survey of high school students found that 18% of females and 39% of males say it is acceptable for a boy to force sex if the girl is high or drunk.
- **School issues.** Teens who use alcohol have higher rates of academic problems and poor performance than non-drinkers. Among eighth-graders, higher truancy rates are associated with greater rates of alcohol use in the past month.
- **Illicit drug use.** More than 67% of young people who start drinking before the age of 15 will try an illicit drug. Children who drink are 7.5 times more likely to use any illicit drug, more than 22 times more likely to use marijuana, and 50 times more likely to use cocaine than children who never drink.
- **Automobile concerns.** When young people drink and get into a car, they tend to make poor decisions that impact their safety. Traffic crashes are the number one killer of teens and over one-third of teen traffic deaths are alcohol-related.

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