



INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION FOR RESPONSIBLE ALCOHOL USE

Produced by: The Industry Association for Responsible Alcohol Use

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(medical, psychologists and educators) in preparing the content.





Teenagers



Alcohol

a guide for parents and teenagers

Teenagers & Alcohol

Dear reader,

We live in a society where alcohol is being used in large amounts by many young South Africans. The use of alcohol by teenagers carries a range of short and long term harmful consequences. This booklet has been produced in an effort to tell parents and teenagers about these consequences.

Use this booklet to help get your family together for open and honest talks about teenage alcohol use. Research has shown that teenagers who have regular chats with their parents about drugs and alcohol are less likely to use these substances than those teens whose parents do not.

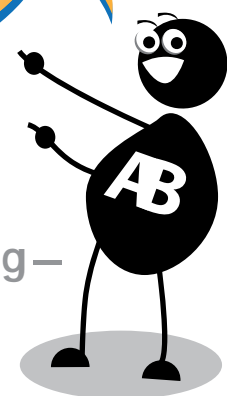
In addition to encouraging talks about alcohol, the information in this booklet may help young people to make informed decisions about their own use of alcohol. It is also hoped that the content of this booklet will help parents to set the right kind of limits and boundaries for their children in respect of alcohol.

Sincerely

The producer and contributors to Teenagers and Alcohol



Alcohol Bug –



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The effects of alcohol use by teenagers

The place of alcohol in our society...

We live in a society where alcohol is part of the way many adults socialise. We also understand that adolescence is a period during which teenagers learn adult behaviour and imitate the adult role models around them. It is understandable that some teenagers may use alcohol and experiment during this time.



While teenage experimentation with alcohol is not new, recent research is showing that there have been some significant changes in the pattern of teenage drinking:

- **Adolescents are starting to drink at a younger age.**
There is a significant rise in the number of 11 to 15 year-olds who drink alcohol regularly.
- **Adolescents are drinking more alcohol.**
Many teens report a pattern of heavy binge drinking with the intention of becoming drunk.
- **There is a change in attitudes towards adolescent drinking.**
Many teens and their parents seem to think that drinking alcohol isn't dangerous or harmful and parents often supply their children with alcohol.

Teenage development...

Adolescence is an important time of emotional, social and psychological development. It is a time when adolescents acquire adult behaviour, and prepare to leave home and live independently.

During adolescence the brain matures, and teenagers gain many intellectual skills. It is possible to promote and encourage adolescent brain development by stimulating the brain, learning new tasks, eating healthy meals and drinking plenty of water, getting plenty of sleep, and exercising regularly.

The teenage brain is vulnerable...

The adolescent brain is particularly exposed to damage that could be caused by alcohol, other drugs, head injuries, and poor nutrition.

Effects of adolescent alcohol use on the brain...

Teenagers are more vulnerable than adults to the following long-term effects of alcohol use:

Decreased concentration.

A decreased ability to focus, maintain attention and avoid distractions.

Teenagers are less vulnerable than adults to the following effects and are able to hide the amount of alcohol they have drunk.

- **Alcohol-induced sedation.**
- **Balance disturbances.**
- **Motor co-ordination impairments.**



Long-term memory damage.

Learning new information and recalling information that has been learnt in the past.

Working memory impairments.

Storing and managing the information required to carry out complex cognitive tasks such as reasoning, comprehension and problem solving.



Crime, violence and sexual assault

Accidents and injury...

High-risk sex...

Reduced performance in sporting activities...


Suicide...



The effects of alcohol use by teenagers

Higher risk of alcoholism...

People who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who have their first drink at age 20 or older. There are many possible reasons for this including the fact that drinking during adolescence has a negative effect on the social and emotional development, which could make a person more likely to develop problems with alcohol later in life.

Crime and violence...

When teenagers drink alcohol their impaired judgement causes them to put themselves into dangerous situations more often. Teens who drink are also far more likely to run into trouble with the police because of poor impulse control and impaired judgement.

Accidents and injury...

Teenagers have a better chance of being injured (sometimes fatally) in accidents and fights when they or those around them have been drinking. Alcohol related motor accidents are one of the most common causes of death among 15 to 20 years olds.

Suicide...

Not only does alcohol use increase symptoms of depression in the long run, it also makes teenagers more impulsive and more likely to act on suicidal thoughts.

Sexual assault...

Sexual assault, including rape among women in late adolescence and early adulthood, usually happens on a date. Alcohol use by the offender, the victim, or both, increases the likelihood of sexual assault by someone you know.

High-risk sex...

Teenagers who drink are more likely to be sexually active. Adolescent alcohol use is also associated with high-risk sexual behaviour, increasing the likelihood of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

Reduced performance in sporting activities...

Studies have shown that alcohol weakens athletic performance by resulting in:

Reduced ability to focus attention

on a task, make high-speed decisions, and assess dangers.

Decreased memory function

and slower reaction time.

Hangover effects, including reduced eye-hand coordination and lack of judgement.

Poorer balance, steadiness, and movement skills.

Alcohol poisoning and death...

Young people can die solely from drinking (as a result of alcohol poisoning). The risk of alcohol poisoning is significantly increased when alcohol consumption is combined with drinking drinks containing large amounts of caffeine. In the USA it is reported that alcohol kills more teens than all other illegal drugs combined.



Everybody's doing it...

Teenagers are easily influenced by the way the media portrays the use of alcohol in marketing strategies, movies, TV and on the Internet. They also often feel that if they don't drink they will have no one to hang out with.

Parental cues...

The example parents set for their children is key in shaping their behaviour.



40% Alcohol

100% Cooldrink

Teenagers are good observers and they learn about alcohol use from others.

Misinformation...

Wrong information and a lack of information about alcohol and its harmful effects sometimes contribute to misuse of alcohol by teenagers.

Why teenagers use alcohol

There are many reasons why teenagers use alcohol. These include:

Escape...

Alcohol is a very powerful drug, which reduces symptoms of stress and anxiety. Because growing up is associated with feelings of frustration, social anxiety, depression, anger etc, teenagers often deal with the pain by turning to alcohol. Teens with undiagnosed and unmanaged anxiety problems are at higher risk of abusing alcohol.

Boredom and instant friends...

Some teenagers have trouble keeping themselves busy, they crave excitement and simply can't handle being alone. Alcohol becomes a very tempting and dangerous solution to staying entertained.

Rebellion...

What better way to express your anger at your parents than doing something they tell you not to? Alcohol is the drug of choice for angry teenagers because it frees them to behave aggressively and defy their parents.

Instant gratification...

Alcohol works quickly and at first the effects feel really good, especially for teens who want to get rid of their negative feelings. Unfortunately, when the effects wear off, the negative feelings return even stronger.

Lack of confidence...

Getting drunk before going to a party is a great example of how alcohol is used by teenagers to give them the confidence to do things that they would otherwise never have risked.



My parents are going to freak out when they find out I've been drinking!

I can't talk to him!

Drink this, it'll take the edge off.

Who cares about exams anyway!

Today's teens hear mixed messages about drinking alcohol and observe adults who use alcohol to relax, to get rid of stress, or to socialise.



Advice to parents

You should start talking to your children about alcohol from the time they are in grade five. Children start talking to their friends about alcohol from quite a young age and they are constantly absorbing ideas about alcohol from TV programmes, adverts and movies. If you don't talk to your child about the use of alcohol, their ideas will be determined by people who don't necessarily have their best interests at heart.

Don't avoid conversation with your teenagers and rather engage openly and honestly. Your input is crucial because almost all other inputs your child receives have some other motive (profit, inclusion into a group, excitement, manipulation, sexual conquest etc).

Some advice about communicating...

- **Do some research beforehand.** Reading this booklet will help as will looking at some of the websites listed on the inside back cover.
- **Be clear in your own mind about what your expectations are** for your child with respect to alcohol consumption. Discuss this with the other parent and try to agree on a common approach.
- **Plan your meeting.** What things do you want to communicate? What do you want to know from your child?
- **Make a time with your child.** Don't simply wait for the right moment as this may only occur after an unfortunate event.
- **Encourage your child to share** his or her thoughts and ideas. Make it clear that you value your child's input, even if you do not agree with some of the things he or she says. Be patient. Listen actively.
- If you can; **show that your child's input has taught you something** or influenced the outcome of the discussion in some positive way, this will help future talks to occur more readily.
- **Make sure that in the end your child is quite clear about your expectations.** Ask questions to test this. Many people do not pick up all the information the first time it is given verbally.



These talks need to happen again and again as your child grows up. The pressures on teenagers change as they get older. Parents need to remain current and relevant in their decision-making. Parental expectations are hugely important in the behaviour of teenagers around alcohol.

Parties and other social gatherings...

Parties and other get-togethers help your child to develop socially. They can be a lot of fun and relatively safe provided proper planning and careful supervision occurs.

These get-togethers should be encouraged and the responsibility of being a host should not be undertaken lightly.

Checklist

If your child is going to a party...

- Contact the parents holding the party and check on the facts concerning the party.
- Talk to your children about your expectations and the consequences of their not living up to them.
- Do not give your children large amounts of cash.
- Make it clear that they cannot leave the party and go to another without getting your permission.
- You (or a trusted parent) should pick them up at the agreed time but they should also know that they can phone you at any stage if they need to leave.
- Sleep-overs are a no-no, unless you have reason to trust the host family completely. Check last-minute sleep-over plans very thoroughly with the host parents.
- Be awake when your children return home or have them wake you. Talk to them for a while.

If you are hosting a party...

- Keep the party at a manageable size. Ensure your adult-to-child balance is workable.
- Agree to guidelines with your teenager as to how the evening is expected to progress - including what time it will end.
- Agree on which parts of the house and garden may be used for the party.
- Be a visible presence at all times.
- Agree to an invitation list beforehand and resist late additions and, especially gate-crashers.
- For larger parties, provide security at the gate and perimeter.
- Be wary of people who leave and then return.
- Secure your own alcohol supply.
- Ban, take in or search bags. Body searches for larger parties could be helpful.
- Provide large quantities of food and encourage people to eat.
- Your responsibility only ends once a child is safely collected. Children should not just disappear. If they do, parents should be contacted.
- Be observant throughout the party and aware that there are mobile delivery services which deliver alcohol to parties.

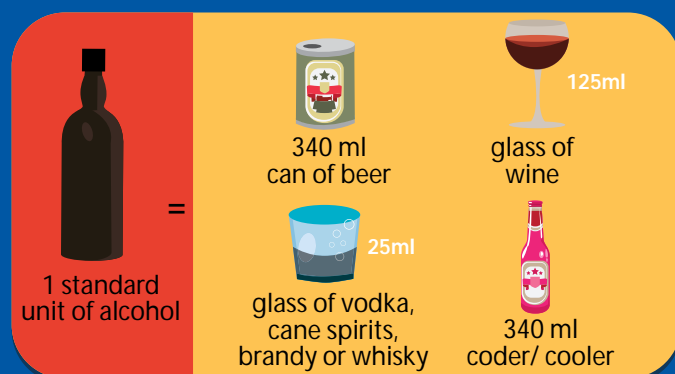
Preventing alcohol abuse by teenagers

There are many things parents can do to reduce the chances of their children developing an unhealthy relationship with alcohol. These include:

- **Talk to your teen.** Many parents are worried about possible alcohol misuse, but they don't always discuss their views and concerns with their children. Rather than waiting until a problem arises, talk with your teen about your concerns and the messages they may be getting from the media and their peers.
- **Encourage teenagers' abilities and interests.** Encourage your teens to take part in activities that develop interests and skills that will help them feel good about themselves without the use of alcohol. Hobbies, school events, sport, healthy relationships, and volunteer work are examples of such activities.
- **Help your teen deal with peer pressure.** Give them some examples of how to say no without losing face: "I don't like the way it (beer, wine) tastes," "I'll be grounded for life if my dad finds out I've been drinking," "I need all my brain cells for rugby practice (math test, homework) tomorrow."
- **Permit white lies.** Tell your teen he or she can "blame" you when under peer pressure. "My mom's going to give me a driving lesson this afternoon." "If I don't drink I'll get to stay out later." Tell them that many times a simple "no thanks" or "not today" will do.
- **Know the facts about alcohol.** You can't expect your child to know the effects of alcohol on the body and the risks of alcohol misuse if you don't have all the information yourself.

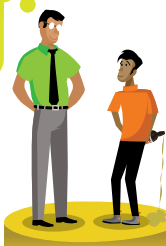
Be informed and ensure your teenager knows the different strengths of different alcohol products and how to compare different drinks in terms of the quantity of pure alcohol each contains.

- **Create strong family ties.** Family activities (for example: sports, movies or family meetings) along with open discussions and flexible rules can be particularly helpful in creating strong family ties. Really listening to your teen, even when you don't agree, will strengthen the ties between you.
- **Guide and limit.** As a parent, you should clearly state rules about alcohol (for example: The reason why you shouldn't drink and drive, is not just to avoid causing an accident but also so you can avoid an accident caused by other people). Calmly talk about alcohol use before problems start (for example: use news reports of alcohol related accidents to discuss the harmful outcomes of drinking).
- **Encourage teens to be healthy.** Talk with your teens about the advantages of eating healthy foods, exercising, driving safely, and getting enough sleep.
- **Make a contract.** Many families have found it helpful to sit down together and agree to a parent-teen "contract" about acceptable and unacceptable alcohol use. The contract is not just an agreement for the teen to remain within clearly stated boundaries but should also outline the consequences for crossing these agreed-on boundaries.
- **Encourage a long-term focus.** Teenagers who have a long-term focus, a vision of their future, goals, and plans are much less likely to drink than those who are attracted to short-term gratification. Prompt your teenagers to think about their future, to make plans and to set goals for themselves.
- **Be aware of the example you set.** Be a role model. If you drink, do so responsibly. If you have a drinking problem, or think you may have one, seek help. If there is a family history of substance abuse, discuss this with your teenager.





• **Keep calm.** Don't assume your child is an alcoholic if he or she uses alcohol once in a while.



• **Be wary of denial.**



• **If you have reason to believe your teen is abusing alcohol** or your efforts to enforce the rules have failed repeatedly, seek help from a health care professional.

What to do if, your child is using alcohol.

What would you do if you discovered that your child was using alcohol without consent? When parents over-react, or deny the problem, they often lose the trust of their teenagers. Keep on talking to your child and do the following:



• **Don't allow anger and fear to overwhelm your effectiveness to communicate.**



• **Explain why you are concerned.**



• **When confronting the problem, first agree on a course of action with your spouse.**



• **Talk about the extent of your child's use** - how often, with whom, where, and why.



• **Let your child know that you do not excuse this behaviour,** although you value him as an individual.

Typical legal consequences

The legal consequences are dependent on the content of each provincial liquor bill.

- No person may sell liquor to a person under the age of eighteen (18) years.
 - No person may give or supply liquor to a person under the age of eighteen (18) years or allow such a person to consume liquor, except in small quantities in the presence of such a person's parent or guardian.
 - A licensee may not allow a person under the age of eighteen (18) years to consume liquor on premises of which he or she is the licensee or which is under his or her control.
 - A licensee may not allow a person under the age of eighteen (18) years to be in a part of licensed premises in which such a person may not be in terms of this Act or in terms of a condition of the license.
- A person under the age of eighteen (18) years may not obtain or consume liquor in contravention of this Act or mislead any person regarding his or her age in order to obtain or to consume liquor or to gain access to parts of licensed premises, which such person may not enter.

Parents are advised to get parental permission should they plan to give alcohol to someone else's child (i.e. to a person who is not yet 18 years of age) or should they suspect that a minor is likely to be offered alcohol at an event they are hosting or that is being hosted on their premises.



Where to get help and more information

The Life Talk Forum

www.lifetalk.co.za

South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence

www.sancanational.org.za
011 781 6410

Stepping Stones Addiction Centre

www.steppingstones.co.za

Drinkaware Trust

www.drinkaware.co.uk

Toll Free Substance Abuse Helpline

0800 121314
SMS 32312

Alcoholics Anonymous Cape Town

021 418 0020

Life Line

www.lifeline.org.za

Life Line Cape Town

021 461 1111

Life Line Johannesburg

011 728 1347



Alcohol & Drug Module, SA Healthinfo
www.sahealthinfo.org/admodule/alcdrug.htm

SA

Faces & Voices of Recovery
www.favor.org.za

SA

South Africans Against Drunk Driving
<http://www.sadd.org.za>

SA

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

USA

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration: Spotlight on underage drinking
www.samhsa.gov/underagedrinking/index.aspx

USA

WIRED
www.wiredinitiative.com

UK