



# Did You Know?

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**Alcohol Safety & the Dangers of Teen Drinking:** The commencement of summer vacation is often synonymous with parties, good times, and beautiful weather. In western culture, alcohol can be a symbol of celebration, especially during summer months. Unfortunately, this sends mixed messages to youth surrounding the dangers linked to alcohol use. As parents, it is vital to start conversations regarding potential health risks associated with underage alcohol consumption. Remind your teens there are healthy ways to celebrate that don't include alcohol- it could save a life, as no amount of alcohol is safe for the adolescent brain.

## What You Should Know:

- According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), youth ages 12-20 consume 11% of all alcohol in the U.S. Although underage drinkers partake in alcohol use less often than those of legal age, the amount of alcohol consumed at one time is much higher in teens. Ultimately, binge drinking accounts for 90% of alcohol consumption in underage drinkers.
- The CDC reports that underage alcohol use can be attributed to more than 4,000 underage deaths each year. Motor vehicle accidents, homicides, suicides, falls, burns, drownings, and alcohol poisonings are all potential tragedies that are linked to teen drinking.
- Underage drinkers who begin using alcohol before the age of fifteen are found to be four times more likely to develop an alcohol use disorder later in life.
- Underage users experience increased instances of sexual or physical assault compared to those who do not use alcohol.
- Binge drinking for males ages 9-17 is defined as drinking 3-5 drinks during a 2 hour period. For females of the same ages, binge drinking involves consuming 3 drinks during a 2 hour time span.
- Potential influences linked to underage drinking include: peer pressure, stress, a desire for independence, ease of access, environmental factors, and learned behavior.

## What You Can Do:

- **Get Ahead of the Issue:** Be involved in your child's life. Cultivating a positive relationship with your child can do wonders in the prevention of substance use. Engage in open discussions regarding everyday life. A developed and comfortable sense of communication can be vital when starting conversations on "tougher" topics, such as alcohol. Also, get to know their friends and encourage them to discover healthy ways to have fun. Lastly, be a positive role model and set an example for your children. It is important to remember that sometimes our actions speak louder than our words.
- **If There Are Signs Of Use:** Set clear rules regarding alcohol use for your children and enforce them. Explain why these rules are in place and how they protect their health and safety. Direct them to reliable websites and studies for any follow-up information.
- **Help Is Available:** If you feel your child might be at risk for or is suffering from an alcohol use disorder, seek help and contact your local prevention agency. The Erie County Council for the Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse can be reached by dialing 716-831-2298. You can also contact the National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service, available at 1-800-662-HELP.

**Alcohol** is the **most used** substance among youth.



Information obtained from: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov); [www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov); [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)

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