

Some **facts** about alcohol—the most prevalent substance used by teens

Alcohol & Your Teen's Health

As teens grow and mature, their bodies go through many changes. Just as important are the changes that take place in their brains.

- One of the most important times for brain development is between the ages of 10–20.
- Research shows the brain is not fully mature until the mid-20s. And not all parts of the brain mature at the same time.
- The difference in how parts of the brain grow can cause a teen to make impulsive decisions, ignore consequences, and act on emotions that put them at risk.

Alcohol Use Affects how Teen Brains Develop

- Studies show that alcohol affects teens differently than adults. Teens are at a greater risk of negative consequences from drinking alcohol.
- New studies show that alcohol use can cause long-term damage to a teen's brain. It can permanently affect how portions of the brain develop.
- Alcohol use can affect how a teen learns and their coordination and motor skills.

Alcohol Dependence

Many parents don't realize how serious the consequences of teen alcohol use can be.

- Research shows that 40% of teens who begin drinking before age 15 are likely to develop alcohol dependence.
- Waiting until age 21 lowers that risk by 70%. Each year a teen delays drinking alcohol, they lower the odds of future alcohol dependence by 14% and alcohol abuse by 8.3%.

By delaying teen alcohol use, you can greatly improve your teen's chances of leading a healthier life now and in the future.

Emotional and Psychological Effects

Adolescence is a time of transition, with changing expectations and friendships that expose teens to new situations and stresses.

- Research shows a link between stress and alcohol consumption.
- The physical effects of growing, which include hormonal changes that affect a teen's mood and behavior, may contribute to an increased risk of alcohol consumption during adolescence.
- Alcohol impairs judgment and has been strongly linked to teenage depression.

During this time of dramatic change, your teen needs your support and encouragement to avoid alcohol and drug use.

Adapted from materials created by the Maine Office of Substance Abuse

Parents: Here is what you can do

- **Keep track** of alcohol or prescription drugs in your home and make sure they are not accessible to teens.
- **Set and enforce** clear rules.
- **Check in** with your teen often.
- **Be awake** when your teen comes home at night and know the signs of alcohol and drug use.
- **Network** with other parents.

