



## Teens and Alcohol

Alcohol is the number one drug of choice for teens, but it is also extremely dangerous. For instance, teens who drink are more likely to have a car crash, get into a fight, have unsafe sex, or experience problems in school. The problem of youth substance abuse is often blamed on their inability to "just say no." The reality is young people constantly get mixed messages from adults and communities.

How can you send clear and consistent messages to your teen about alcohol use? Never buy alcohol for anyone under 21. Lock up and monitor your alcohol at home. Do not allow your teen to have a party that involves alcohol. Know who they're spending time with. Going to parties without a parent or adult there is usually not a good idea. Tell your teen that it's against your rules for them to drink and that alcohol is not a rite of passage. Finally, model responsible behavior. Much of what teens do is a result of your actions and your relationship with them. Talk about alcohol and listen to what your teen has to say.

Following are some facts to keep in mind & share when you talk with your teen.

- Parents make a difference. Parents are frequently cited as the major reason why teens decide not to drink alcohol.
- Alcohol use affects health. For instance, when abused, it can damage every body organ. It also affects the brain and self control.
- It is against the law for anyone under 21 to use or possess alcohol.
  - Underage drinkers face up to a \$1,000 fine.
  - In Minnesota, a teen who is driving a motor vehicle can be stopped and tested for alcohol. If there is even one drop of alcohol in the youth's system, his or her driver's license can be revoked.
  - In Minnesota, it is a felony to provide alcohol to a person under 21. The adult provider could face up to a year in jail and \$3,000 in fines. The adult could also be sued for any injury or damage caused by the underage drinker.

For more information, contact the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 1-800-729-6686. Or visit them at [www.health.org](http://www.health.org)

Source: Minneapolis Dept. of Health; Hennepin Co. Health publication, *Because it Matters*; University of Minnesota Extension Service

For more information on parenting call INFO-U at 612-624-2200 and request a catalog of available topics.

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