



# Topic: Underage Drinking

## What We Need to Know

Consequences of underage drinking cannot be underestimated. The primary goal of prevention is to delay the first use of alcohol or other drugs. Research indicates that adolescents who begin drinking before age 14 are significantly more likely to experience alcohol dependence at some point in their lives compared to individuals who begin drinking after 21 years of age. During adolescence significant changes occur in the body, including the formation of new networks in the brain. Alcohol use during this time may affect brain development. In addition, youth who drink alcohol are more likely to experience a number of negative consequences, such as physical or sexual assault, unintentional injuries, memory problems, legal problems, and impaired school performance.

How can we prevent substance abuse? Experts recommend pervasive, consistent messages to young people about drugs and alcohol from many messengers: schools, parents, peers, and the community repeatedly throughout childhood and adolescence. Parents have more influence than they think. In fact, teens' primary source of advice about drugs and alcohol is their parents, according to a study funded by the Hazelden Foundation.

## Conversation Starters

What or who helps influence your decision making when it comes to drinking?

Do you understand how we feel about underage drinking?

What really makes for a "good time" when you and your friends get together?

## Resources

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Underage Drinking Facts](#)

[SAMHSA Underage Drinking – Talk Early, Talk Often](#)