

Underage Drinking: What's the Risk & What Can Parents Do?

It is summertime: Graduations, weddings, picnic, later curfews, fewer responsibilities – a time when most young people have their first experience with alcohol.

What are the real risks of underage drinking?

- Brain damage can result
 - Alcohol affects a teen's developing brain. Underage alcohol use interferes with brain activity.
- The Brain can be “programmed” for alcoholism
 - Research shows children who begin drinking before age 15 have a 40% chance of becoming alcohol-dependent, in contrast, a persons who waits until 21 to start drinking only have a 7% chance of becoming an alcoholic.
- Can Kill
 - Traffic accidents are the #1 killer of teens – more than one-third of teen accidents are alcohol related. Kids do not have to get behind the wheel to die from drinking –alcohol poisoning is more likely to kill teens than all other illicit drugs combined.

What Can Parents Do?

1. **Be a positive influence** - teenagers still listen to their parents more than anybody else.
2. **Develop Family Bonding** - children who feel close to their parents are less likely to drink. New research indicates families who eat dinner together on a regular basis are less likely to have problems with underage drinking.
3. **Set Clear Boundaries** - rules and expectations about no underage drinking are essential.
4. **Monitor Your Teen** - Knowing where your children are, who they are with and what they are doing helps to prevent underage drinking