

SBIRT COLORADO UNDERAGE DRINKING

FACTS

- One out of every two 8th graders has tried alcohol.¹
- More kids use alcohol than use tobacco or illicit drugs.²
- More children are killed by alcohol than all illegal drugs combined.³
- Children who begin drinking alcohol before the age of 15 are five times more likely than those who start after age 21 to develop alcohol problems.⁴
- The chances of becoming dependent decrease by 14% for each year of delay in the onset of use.⁵
- The prevalence of alcohol dependence is highest in the 18-24 year old group.⁶

WHY DO SOME KIDS DRINK?

With major developmental changes happening, such as puberty and increasing independence, just being an adolescent may be the key factor for underage drinking. This explains why teens act impulsively, not recognizing the consequences of their actions—such as drinking.⁷

RISK TAKING The brain develops well into the twenties, continuing to establish important connections. Behavior characteristics of adolescents, such as thrill-seeking, are a result of the developing brain.

EXPECTANCIES The teen's view of alcohol influences drinking behavior, such as whether they drink and how much.

SENSITIVITY AND TOLERANCE Differences between the adult brain and the maturing adolescent brain account for why many young drinkers are able to consume much larger amounts of alcohol than adults before experiencing negative effects.⁸

HEREDITARY Factors that cause and affect a child's risk for alcohol problems, including tolerance to its effects, may be directly linked to genetics.

RISKS OF UNDERAGE DRINKING

BRAIN IMPAIRMENT Alcohol can damage parts of the developing teenage brain that control:⁹

- Motor coordination, including the ability to walk and drive.
- Impulse control. Drinking lowers inhibitions and increases the chances a person will do something they'll regret when they are sober.
- Memory. Impaired recollection and even blackouts can occur when too much alcohol is consumed.
- Judgment and decision making capacity. Drinking may lead young people to engage in risky behaviors that can result in illness, injury and even death.¹⁰

Alcohol use among youth increases violence, risky sexual behavior, poor academic performance and other harmful behaviors.¹¹

VIOLENCE Youth who drink before age 15 are 12 times more likely to be injured while under the influence and 10 times more likely to be in a fight after drinking, compared with those who wait until they are 21.¹²

SEXUAL ACTIVITY Alcohol use is a strong predictor of sexual activity and unprotected sex.¹³ 18% of females and 39% of males say it is acceptable for a boy to force sex if the girl is high or drunk.¹⁴

SCHOOL Teens who use alcohol have higher rates of academic problems and poor performance.¹⁵ Among eighth-graders, higher truancy rates are associated with greater rates of alcohol use.¹⁶

ILLICIT DRUG USE More than 67% of young people who start drinking before the age of 15 will try an illicit drug. Those who drink are 7.5 times more likely to use any illicit drug, more than 22 times more likely to use marijuana, and 50 times more likely to use cocaine than youth who never drink.¹⁷

DRIVING When young people drink and drive, they tend to make poor decisions.¹⁸ Car crashes are the number-one killer of teens and over one-third of teen traffic deaths are alcohol-related.¹⁹

WHAT YOU SAY AND DO, MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Kids spend a lot of time with friends, television, music and magazines, but they are also tuned in to you. You impact them in many ways every day.

- They are less likely to drink when their parents are involved in their lives and when they and their parents report feeling close to each other.²⁰
- You can influence their behavior by observing the rules of a moderate drinker or by not drinking.²¹
- Older siblings' alcohol use can influence the use of younger siblings in the family, particularly for same sex siblings.²²

SET CLEAR RULES

BE SPECIFIC Tell your children what the law is, what your household rules are, and what behavior you expect.

BE CONSISTENT Be sure your children understand the rules are to be maintained at all times, and that the rules hold true even at other people's houses.

BE REASONABLE Don't change the rules in mid-stream or add new consequences without talking to your children.

RECOGNIZE GOOD BEHAVIOR Always let your children know how pleased you are when they respect the rules of the household.

PUT THE RULES INTO PRACTICE Write out your most important family rules and post them clearly where they are seen often by everyone in the family.



www.improvinghealthcolorado.org

SBIRT COLORADO UNDERAGE DRINKING

WHAT YOU CAN SAY

Talk about your personal beliefs with your child. By sharing your values and family history about alcohol you can create trust and understanding between you and your child.

IF YOU DRINK Explain your rules for drinking responsibly and in moderation. Tell your children some people should not drink alcohol at all. These include:²⁰

- Children and adolescents.
- Individuals who cannot restrict their drinking to moderate levels.
- Women who are trying to conceive or who are pregnant.
- People who plan to drive or take part in activities needing attention or skill.
- People using prescription and over-the-counter medications.

IF YOU DON'T DRINK Explain your reasons for not drinking, whether they are religious, health-related or because of family history. Encourage your children to talk with you if they have questions about why you choose not to drink.

WHETHER YOU DRINK OR NOT Be clear that you do not want your children to drink alcohol until they are 21 years old; and when they are 21, if they decide to drink, they should drink in moderation.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

TALK EARLY AND OFTEN WITH YOUR CHILD Establish an open line of communication and get into the habit of talking with your child every day.

GET INVOLVED Talking with your child about his or her activities opens up an opportunity for you to share your interests and values. Kids are much less likely to have mental health and substance abuse problems when they have positive activities to do and when caring adults are involved in their lives.

BE A ROLE MODEL Think about what you say and how you act in front of your child. Your own actions are the most powerful indicator of what is appropriate and acceptable in your family. Do not take part in illegal, unhealthy, or dangerous activities related to alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

TEACH KIDS TO CHOOSE FRIENDS WISELY Teach your child how to form positive relationships. Help your child to understand what qualities to look for in a friend.

MONITOR YOUR CHILD'S ACTIVITIES Know where your children are and get acquainted with their friends. Limit the amount of time they spend without an adult being present. Unsupervised children have more opportunities to experiment with risky behaviors, including the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

SET RULES Make clear, sensible rules for your child and enforce them with consistency and appropriate consequences. These rules can help protect your child's physical safety and mental well-being, which lower his or her risk for substance abuse problems.

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Links to the following site and additional resources are available at **SBIRT COLORADO** • improvinghealthcolorado.org

- **ALATEEN** • al-anon.alateen.org • 1.888.425.2666
- **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS** • nacoa.org • 1.888.554.2627
- **ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS** • aa.org
- **COLORADO ACCESS TO RECOVERY** • atrcolorado.org • 303.953.4053 or toll-free, 1.888.227.3616 • No-cost assessment for youth under the age of 25
- **SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH HUMAN SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (SAMHSA)** • Family.samhsa.gov • Supports the efforts of parents and other caring adults to promote mental health and prevent the use of alcohol and other drugs among 7- to 18-year-olds.
- **SAMHSA'S NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE FOR ALCOHOL AND DRUG INFORMATION** • ncadi.samhsa.gov
- **SAMHSA NATIONAL DRUG INFORMATION TREATMENT AND REFERRAL HOTLINE** • dasis3.samhsa.gov • 800-662-4357
- **SMART RECOVERY** • smartrecovery.org • 866-951-5357
- **NATIONAL YOUTH CRISIS HOTLINE** • 1800hithome.com • 800-442-4673
- **THE ANTI-DRUG** • theantidrug.com • A drug prevention information center, and an interactive, supportive community for parents.
- **NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON ALCOHOL ABUSE AND ALCOHOLISM** • niaaa.nih.gov

REFERENCES AND SOURCES

Adapted from *Start Talking Before They Start Drinking. A Family Guide*, a SAMSHA Publication
1-20. Specific sources cited at www.improvinghealthcolorado.org.



tel 303.369.0039 x245
toll-free 1.866.369.0039 x245
www.improvinghealthcolorado.org

Improving health. Changing lives.