

Alcohol

Facts for Parents and Caregivers

Parents are the leading influence on their kids' decision to drink or not to drink. Start talking to your kids early and often.

Alcohol is a drug.

Alcohol is a depressant, which means it slows down the function of the brain. Alcohol affects people differently at different stages of life—for children and adolescents, alcohol can interfere with normal brain development. Your child's brain is not fully developed until around the age of 25. As a result, the harms from drinking alcohol can alter the development of the areas of the brain related to learning, memory, and judgment. In general, underage drinking can lead your child to make poor decisions and engage in risky/harmful behavior that can result in a variety of serious consequences such as injuries, sexual assaults, legal trouble, and even death.

Why is underage drinking a problem?

Addiction

A teen's brain is much more susceptible to alcohol dependence than an adult's. Alcohol tricks the brain's pleasure-reward system into generating pleasure-reward feelings from a harmful chemical instead of a real experience. Because the teen brain produces an abundance of dopamine, it can rapidly go from liking, to wanting, to craving alcohol.

Youth who start drinking before age 15 are 3.5 times more likely to develop an alcohol use disorder in their lifetime than people who start drinking at or after age 21.

What can you do?

- Talk to your child about the real cost of drinking alcohol.
- Protect, Don't Provide.
- Get tips on how to talk to your kids about alcohol at TalkNowAZ.com

Brain Development

The use of alcohol during adolescence can alter brain development, potentially resulting in long-lasting changes in brain structure and function. Underage alcohol use can cause damage to the areas of the brain that control memory, emotional regulation, learning, and decision making.

Binge Drinking

When young people drink, they drink a lot at one time. On average, young people have about 5 drinks on a single occasion. This is called binge drinking, a very dangerous way of drinking that can lead to serious problems and even death.

Protect, Don't Provide

Underage drinking is not a rite of passage, it's against the law. In Arizona, providing alcohol to a minor is a class 1 misdemeanor. It is not "cool" to host parties or gatherings where underage drinking occurs. As a host, you can be held legally responsible for any injuries caused by an underage person who consumes alcohol in your home. Protect your kids, don't provide them with alcohol.

Helpful Resources

Statewide Resources

- **1-800-662-HELP (4357) | SAMHSA's National Helpline**
Free, confidential treatment referral and information service *available 24/7* (in English and Spanish).
- **Al-Anon.org | Al-Anon**
For people whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking.
- **DrugFree.org | Partnership for Drug-Free Kids**
Peer support for parents and caregivers. Text **JOIN** to **55753** to get help and hope by text.
- **FindTreatment.gov**
Find treatment resources available in your area.
- **TalkNowAZ.com**
Get tips on how to talk to youth about alcohol and other substances.

Youth Resources

- Text **HELLO** to **741741** | *Available 24/7*
Text anonymously with a trained crisis counselor for free.
- **Teen Lifeline** | *Available 24/7* **1-800-248-TEEN (8336)**
Arizona support line for teens operated by teens.
- **9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** | *Available 24/7*
Helps individuals in suicidal crisis with support.
- **Teens Helping Teens** | *Available 6p to 9p PST*
1-800-TLC-TEEN OR text **TEEN** to **839863** to speak with another teen.
- **Al-Anon-AZ.org/Teens-2 | Alateen: Arizona Al-Anon for Teens**
For youth whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking.
- **LearnMoreAZ.org**
Get the facts on underage drinking & other substances.