

## What Youth Should Know About Alcohol

Most middle school students don't drink alcohol, which is great! But experience has shown that those who do are more likely to experience:

- School problems, such as higher absence and poor or failing grades.
- Social problems, such as fighting and lack of participation in youth activities (like sports!)
- Unintentional injuries like burns, falls, and drowning.
- Disruption of normal growth and sexual development.
- Changes in brain development that may have life-long effects.
- Memory problems.
- Physical and sexual assault.
- Higher risk for suicide and homicide.
- Abuse of other drugs.

## Alcohol and Athletic Performance

Alcohol can impair your sports performance for up to 72 hours. Alcohol can cause:

- Muscle cramps — During heavy exercise, burning sugar can produce lactic acid as a by-product. Too much lactic acid leads to muscle fatigue and cramps. Drinking can lead to a bigger buildup of lactic acid and increase the risk of cramping.
- Decreased endurance level — The blood sugar a body needs for energy is produced by the liver releasing glucose into the bloodstream. Alcohol reduces your ability to produce this sugar, so you have less energy and endurance.
- Slowed reaction time — Alcohol slows down the central nervous system and the brain's ability to process information. As long as alcohol remains in the body, it can affect reaction time, coordination, accuracy, and balance—all of which are important to optimal performance in sports.

It has been shown that youth who start drinking before age 15 are six times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse later in life than those who wait until they're 21. Your best bet? Don't start!

- Know the truth. Despite all the alcohol use on TV and in movies, music videos, billboards and magazines—most teens don't use alcohol.
- Make friends, develop athletic skills, control your weight, be independent, be cool ... play sports. Your actions in middle school can affect your eligibility in high school.
- Don't waste money on alcohol. What other things could you spend that money on?
- Get involved: encourage other students to stay away from alcohol; join community efforts to prevent underage drinking (like SADD).

For more information go to [playforkeepsalaska.org](http://playforkeepsalaska.org)

## What Coaches Should Know About Underage Drinking

### Coaches—You Can Influence Youth

Alcohol can impair your student's sports performance for up to 72 hours. Alcohol can cause:

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- Slowed reaction time — Alcohol slows down the central nervous system and the brain's ability to process information. As long as alcohol remains in the body, it can affect reaction time, coordination, accuracy, and balance—all of which are important to optimal performance in sports.

### Take a Stand

- When talking to players, remember they relate more to messages about the immediate effects of alcohol use (such as poorer athletic performance) than to its long-term health threats.
- Openly acknowledge and support the understanding that underage drinking is considered an important issue at your school.
- Know the school policies about underage drinking and be ready to enforce the consequences of breaking those rules, even with your star players.
- Recognize your influence with young people. Don't wear sportswear from alcohol-sponsored events, or share stories about past drinking.
- Understand the impact of advertising on youth.
  - Results from one study indicate that beer advertisements are a significant predictor of an adolescent's knowledge, preference, and loyalty for beer brands, as well as current drinking behavior and intentions to drink.
  - Television advertising changes attitudes about drinking. Young people report more positive feelings about drinking and their own likelihood to drink after viewing alcohol ads.
  - The alcohol industry spends \$2 billion per year on all media advertising.
  - The beer brewing industry itself spent more than \$770 million on television ads and \$15 million on radio ads in 2000.

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## What Parents Should Know About Underage Drinking

### Parents—You Can Influence Your Children

#### Boost Their Self-Esteem

Teens who have high self-esteem are better equipped to make smart choices, deal with peer pressure, and avoid underage drinking. Boost your teen's self-esteem by:

- Praising achievements
- Helping set realistic goals
- Giving choices
- Offering responsibilities
- Focusing on teen's strengths without comparing to others
- Taking all of your teen's concerns seriously

#### Talk To your kids about alcohol

Starting the Conversation – (These tips are useful when talking about tobacco or drugs, too.)

Say something to show you are open-minded, then ask your teen about his or her own experiences. Use thought-provoking questions that can be asked in a supportive, non-threatening way. For example:

- Do you know kids who drink?
- How has it affected them?
- Have you ever been offered alcohol by someone you knew?
- If so, what did you say? If not, what would you say?
- What if someone really pushed you?
- What would you say if they said... Is there another side to this view?
- Do you see any risks?
- Do you have any concerns?

#### Be Involved

As a parent you can work with your local school system to help prevent underage drinking.

Working together parents, teachers, administrators and coaches can be powerful influencers of teen behavior. This checklist can help as you talk with your school:

- My teen's school will help/intervene if there is reason to believe a teen is drinking.
- My teen's school requires parents to be kept informed of school policies regarding underage drinking.
- I will actively support school policies on underage drinking and the enforcement of them.
- If I hear information from my teens about potential issues in school, I will share those issues with school authorities.

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