

ALCOHOL & KIDS ARE A DANGEROUS MIX



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The brain develops through age 20 and damage from alcohol on the developing brain can be long-term and irreversible.

Short-term or moderate alcohol consumption impairs learning and memory far more quickly and to a greater degree in youth than in adults.

Alcohol can damage every organ in a young body. It is absorbed more directly into the blood stream and can increase risk for a variety of life-threatening diseases.

Youth who use alcohol are more likely to become sexually active at an earlier age and engage in their risky behavior.

Youth who begin to drink before the age of 21 are far more likely to suffer lifelong consequences (such as addiction or serious injury) associated with their use.

Nearly 1 in 3 ninth through twelfth graders are regular users of alcohol. These regular users are at far greater risk for dangerous behavior than their non-drinking peers:

- They are three times more likely to be absent 10 or more days from school.
- They are three times more likely to carry a gun or other weapon to school.
- They are four times more likely to get in to trouble with the police.

Why is Prevention with 9- to 13-Year-Olds So Important?

- The average age for first use for kids in Greater Cincinnati is 12.3.
- Around age 10 or 11, tweens begin to approve of alcohol.
- Parents are still very influential to tweens; but if the conversations don't begin, peers have more influence in making alcohol use seem positive.
- Youth are more likely to try alcohol during periods of change; for example, from elementary to junior high and junior high to high school.
- More than 40% of tweens who drink before the age of 13 abuse alcohol or become dependent later in life.
- By the end of the 7th grade, 44% of youth have experimented with at least one drug.



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What Parents Can Do

- Listen to your children *and* let them know you are listening.
- Tell them you expect them not to use.
- Make and enforce clear and consistent rules with appropriate consequences. Discuss the consequences your child will face if they break family rules.
- Develop a Family Action Plan to navigate difficult situations. Have them call and say a code phrase like, "How is Grandma", if they find themselves in a situation where alcohol is present. This code phrase really means, "I need a ride home now, please come get me."
- Help your children know the health and social consequences of using alcohol even once, so they can make informed decisions.
- Teach your children that they can have fun without alcohol.
- Tell your children that alcohol is illegal for people under the age of 21 no matter who gives it to you.
- Tell your children that alcohol is a drug and is a poison to young bodies no matter what form it comes in: beer, wine, wine cooler or whiskey.
- Be a good role model.

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The Center
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