



# ALCOHOL

Ads for alcohol make people look happy and pretty.  
They always look like they're having fun!  
Here's an example of what you usually see.



## HERE'S WHAT THEY DON'T TELL YOU!!

Drinking can take away your dreams

Drinking can take away the power you need to make decisions

Drinking doesn't make everything more fun

Drinking can cause major health problems

You may start to rely on alcohol to relax

You can hurt yourself and people you care about

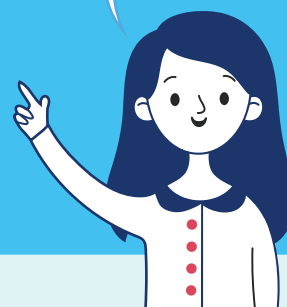
It's illegal if you're under 21

Drinking causes hangovers! That means drinkers feel awful the next morning. Headache, Nausea, Vomiting, Heartburn, Shakiness -yuck!

Can we go home? I am feeling sick.

I can't even watch this game. I can't focus on the football.

I guess real life can be very different from ads on T.V.



# DOES THIS MEAN ALL DRINKING IS BAD?



Alcohol has been around for thousands of years as part of celebrations, socializing, and religious services. And many adults can -and do -drink in moderate or **LOW-RISK** ways that do not have negative consequences.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “moderate” means having no more than 1 drink a day for women & no more than 2 drinks a day for men.

## IT ALSO MEANS DRINKING:

### IN THE RIGHT WAY:

Sipping slowly. That means not gulping or chugging (and certainly not having more than 1 standard drink an hour).

### AT THE RIGHT TIME AND PLACE:

NOT at school, work, or when doing anything that requires alertness and coordination, such as:

- Driving a car - or using any machinery
- Sports
- Boating
- Swimming
- Hunting

### FOR THE RIGHT REASONS:

- Escape
- Relax
- Lose control
- Feel accepted

NOT when drinking is done to:

- Rebel against authority
- Make it easier (perhaps less scary) to meet new people
- Look more mature and independent

# BECAUSE ALCOHOL TRULY IS A POWERFUL DRUG, PEOPLE NEED TO DRINK IT WITH CARE.

Alcohol can change the way a person thinks, acts, and feels. Its main ingredient (ethyl alcohol or ethanol) is a depressant. This means it slows down the central nervous system and can affect the brain in complex ways.

Alcohol can also interact with medications used to treat high blood pressure, diabetes, and ❤️ disease. Combining alcohol with medicine can interfere with the way medication is supposed to work.

Alcohol can lead to both psychological and physical dependence (also known as addiction).

Additionally, alcohol consumed in large quantities can lead to alcohol poisoning. People can, and sometimes do die from drinking too much in a short period of time.



## WARNING !



If women have 4 or more drinks in a row or men have 5 or more drinks in a row, they are engaging in “High Risk” or “Binge Drinking”.

Excessive drinking can cause people to pass out. Passing out is a warning sign that drinkers are in **SERIOUS** trouble. **NEVER** leave them alone.

Instead, call for help and get them to the hospital immediately. Even when an intoxicated person appears to be sleeping it off, the alcohol in their stomach is still continuing to enter their bloodstream.

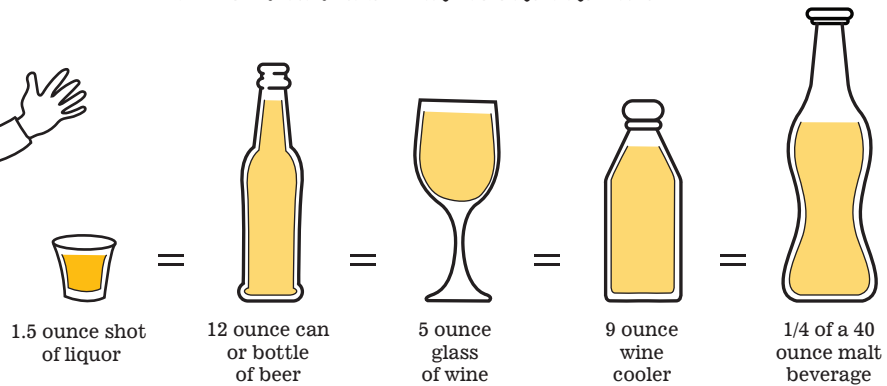
## BOTTOM LINE

Binge drinking is not a party game.  
Excessive drinking can be a question of life or death!  
Alcohol also should be taken seriously because it plays a part in 1/2 of all fatal (that means deadly) car accidents, 1/2 of all murders, 1/2 of all reported rapes, and 1/3 of all completed suicides.

Remember, people **CAN** be alcohol-free.  
In fact, about one third of adults in the United States are!

# WHAT EXACTLY IS ALCOHOL?

Alcohol...also known as booze or juice...comes in many forms.  
It is generally made from grains, fruits, or vegetables.  
A "Standard Drink" looks like this:



## Which one contains the MOST alcohol?

Surprisingly, they each contain  
about the SAME amount!

## So what happens in people's bodies when they drink?

- The alcohol goes directly to the stomach.
- The alcohol rapidly enters the bloodstream and goes to the brain.
- What happens next depends on age:
  - In people under 22, the brain becomes stimulated, causing them to feel excited and to become louder, more talkative, and more active.
  - In those over 22, alcohol has the opposite effect, causing the brain and central nervous system to slow down.
- For everyone, some alcohol eventually leaves the body through the kidneys (urine), lungs (breath), and skin (sweat).
- Most of the alcohol is metabolized or broken down by the liver at the rate of one drink per hour.
- This means that until the liver is ready to burn up the alcohol, it keeps circulating through the body affecting the way people think, act, & feel.



# DOES ALCOHOL AFFECT EVERYONE THE SAME WAY?

## THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL DEPEND ON:

### GENDER

Alcohol has a more powerful effect on women than men. This is because males have more alcohol dehydrogenase, an enzyme that breaks alcohol down. Also because women's bodies generally are smaller and have less water than men's bodies. Since alcohol dilutes easily in water, and since men have more water than women, the alcohol men drink is more easily watered down.

### WEIGHT

The less someone weighs, the greater the potential impact.

### AGE

Alcohol tends to stimulate young people, but slow down those over age 22.

### EXPERIENCE WITH ALCOHOL

People's past experiences with alcohol can influence how it might affect them in the future.

### AMOUNT OF FOOD IN STOMACH

While being full can't stop a person from becoming drunk, having food in the stomach can slow down the rate at which alcohol is absorbed by the bloodstream...but only a little.

### THE FASTER PEOPLE DRINK

The faster people drink, the faster they get drunk.

### BODY CHEMISTRY

One of the reasons it's hard to predict exactly how any drug will make users feel is that everyone's body chemistry is constantly changing!

### EXPECTATIONS

How alcohol affects people can be influenced by what drinkers expect to happen.

### AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL CONSUMED

The more people drink at one time, the more powerful the effect.

### PRESENCE OF MEDICATIONS

Such as tranquilizers (prescribed to help people relax), narcotic pain killers, or sedative medications (prescribed to help people fall asleep at night). Together with alcohol, any of these can add up to  $1 + 1 = 2$ , or 3, or 4! Sometimes with the result that people's breathing rates become so seriously low that they never wake up.



And not just for adults. A national study showed that 81% of high school students also used this drug.

# POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL INCLUDE:



- **Temporary relief or change of feelings.**
- **Stimulation**- especially in people under 22 years of age.
- **Slowed down body functions**- especially in those over age 22.
- **Slurred speech.**
- **Impaired ability**- to see, hear, walk, talk, and think.
- **Loss of judgement**- harder to make good decisions.
- **Mental confusion.**
- **Nausea**- upset stomach.
- Vomiting.
- Loss of emotional control- like crying uncontrollably or flying into a rage. Besides being embarrassing, this can actually be dangerous. More than 50% of all people convicted of violent crimes had been drinking alcohol at the time.
- Reduce inhibitions- that means people say and do things they ordinarily wouldn't.
- Sleep problems.
- Unwanted sexual activity.

- **Lifelong problems for unborn babies-**  
When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, so does her baby, since babies are smaller, it hits them harder, causing damage that can last their whole lives. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), refers to a variety of conditions that can occur to someone whose mother drinks alcohol during pregnancy. If the effects are severe enough, it may be a case of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). In FAS, babies can have distinctive facial features, poorer coordination, even heart defects. They may have trouble growing, thinking, speaking and learning normally. They may also be hyperactive and have behavior problems and poorer social skills. FASD is the #1 preventable cause of intellectual disabilities and birth defects in the United States. Any child whose mother drinks alcohol during pregnancy is at risk for FASD. A pregnant woman's drinking, **EVEN ONCE**, can be dangerous!
- **Possible death- Fact:** Alcohol is a leading cause of death among 15 to 24 years old. These are tragedies that **NEVER** need to happen.

Signed, Dr. DQ



Pay Special Attention To This Warning  
**ALCOHOL CAN HURT SPORTS  
PERFORMANCE!**

Players that drink alcohol are more likely to become injured  
and lose their competitive edge.

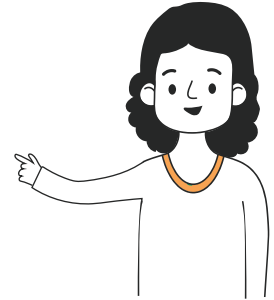


# ALCOHOL CAN ALSO CAUSE A HOST OF OTHER SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEMS



Drinker's health problems affect everyone around them. Alcohol-related health problems extend to family, friends, and coworkers to name a few.

A few of these serious health problems include:



**Accidents:** Alcohol is involved in 40% of fatal falls, 50% of fatal car crashes, and 60% of drownings and fatal burns!

**Brain Damage:** Recent studies show that brain damage from binge drinking can occur in less than a year.

**Cancer:** Including mouth, larynx, esophagus, breast, and liver cancer.

**Heart Disease:** Including Cardiomyopathy, Arrhythmias, high blood pressure, stroke, and heart failure.

**Health Complications:** Alcohol can make certain diseases – like the flu, pneumonia, and HIV/AIDS – a LOT worse.

**Obesity / Overweight:** Type 2 diabetes & joint problems.

**D.T.'s:** Delirium tremens (the “shakes”) is a life-threatening condition that can occur when someone who is addicted tries to withdraw from alcohol.

**Stomach Problems:** Such as ulcers and gastritis.

**Malnutrition:** This can result from not having enough to eat or not eating enough of the right kinds of food. However, even if people who are addicted to alcohol eat healthily, they can become malnourished.

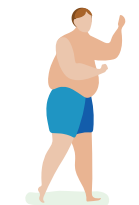
How? Because sometimes their bodies become unable to get nutrients out of the food they eat. Nutrients are all the “good things” in food that help keep bodies healthy, fit, and strong.

**Liver Damage:** Including hepatitis, cirrhosis, fatty liver disease, and cancer.

**Emotional Problems:** Like anxiety and depression.

**Suicide:** Alcohol seems to make depression worse. That may be why many suicides are alcohol-related.

## BODY PARTS AFFECTED BY ALCOHOL:



**Beer Belly**  
(gaining one)



**Heart**



**Brain**



**Stomach**



**Liver**



**Muscles**  
(losing them)



**Bones**

\*because alcohol is fattening and full of “empty” vs. nutritional calories

# CAN ANY OTHER PROBLEMS BE ALCOHOL RELATED?



Unfortunately, yes!!!

**SCHOOL PROBLEMS:** Missing school, getting bad grades, being suspended, dropping out.

**WORK PROBLEMS:** Missing work, getting in conflicts with co-workers, doing poorly because of a hangover.

**SOCIAL PROBLEMS:** Alcohol can interfere with how a relationship normally develops (like it might make you do something stupid when you really wanted to make a good impression instead). More importantly, did you know that **Alcohol - all by itself - is the #1 "DATE RAPE DRUG?"** Drinking increases a person's risk of becoming either a victim OR a perpetrator of sexual violence. Alcohol is also frequently involved in other crimes against women such as stalking and sexual harassment.

**LEGAL PROBLEMS:** Because of crimes like assaults, burglaries, child abuse and neglect, rapes, and violent murders. When people aren't thinking clearly because the part of their brain that helps them decide if an idea is silly, dangerous, or downright wrong is essentially sleeping (Remember, alcohol IS a depressant), it's easy to get caught up doing things they might later regret.

**CAR CRASHES:** Alcohol affects judgment and coordination that leads people to take risks while their skills are messed up. Drinkers often think their driving is getting better when it actually is getting worse.

That's why you should **NEVER** ride in a car if the driver has been drinking.

Following this rule may save **YOUR** life as well as those of family members and friends and strangers!

For more on this topic, check out the next page.





# D.W.I. = DRIVING WHILE INTOXICATED

## D.W.I. IS ... DANGEROUS! IRRESPONSIBLE!! ILLEGAL!!!

Drunk driving is the most prosecuted crime in the United States. Police officers determine if people have been drinking and driving by measuring their BAC (Blood Alcohol Content or Blood Alcohol Concentration). They use a breathalyzer (which measures alcohol in the breath), or a blood or urine test.

Driving anywhere in the U.S. with a BAC of .08% = a D.W.I.  
In addition, driving in New York State with a BAC from .05 to .07 = Driving With Ability Impaired (DWAI).

There really is no “safe” amount of drinking one can do before driving,

**THE BEST POLICY IS SIMPLY NEVER TO DRIVE AFTER DRINKING — PERIOD**

That's why most countries have legal BACs lower than that of the United States.

Most of Europe (and Australia) have set their legal BAC at .05%.

In Japan, it's .03%, and in Sweden only .02%!

All states in the United States now have “**Zero Tolerance**” laws for young driv-

**U** DRINK

**U** DRIVE

**U** LOSE

### WHY SUCH A TOUGH LAW?

- 1) Since young drivers lack experience, they are more likely to have accidents.
- 2) Because they're more likely to be affected by low levels of alcohol than older drivers.
- 3) Because alcohol-related crashes are one of the leading causes of death for young people.
- 4) Because the more ANYONE drinks, the greater the chances of a **CRASH !!**



Likelihood of Being in a Crash



## NOTE

50% of all traffic deaths are alcohol-related. To avoid becoming another statistic, refuse to get in a car if the driver has been drinking.

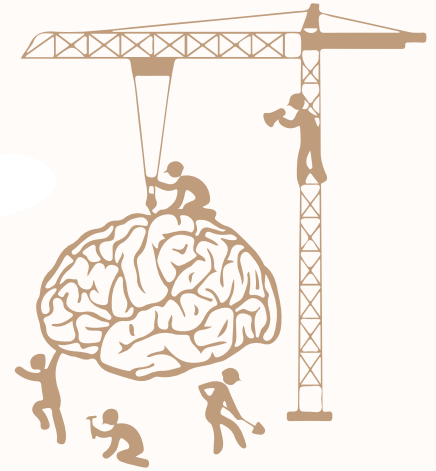
Also remember that NOT drinking is always an option. If you don't want to drink, for any reason, just say “no thanks” and expect others to respect your decision.



# IS THERE ANYTHING PEOPLE CAN DO TO AVOID DEVELOPING PROBLEMS WITH ALCOHOL?



The human brain is  
**STILL UNDER  
CONSTRUCTION.**  
It isn't fully developed till  
about age **25!**



For starters, people should know (and then stay away from) anything that constitutes **RISKY** (read “potentially hazardous”) **DRINKING**.

People for whom drinking is risky include all people under 21 because:

**It's illegal!** For a good reason. Keep reading. **Kids' brains** respond differently to alcohol. A young person's brain is still developing, so using a drug like alcohol that affects the brain is not a good idea. In fact, kids and teens who drink a lot can cause life-long damage to their thinking abilities. In 10 to 12 year olds, alcohol can interfere with a chemical that helps with brain mapping showing nerve pathways which way to go. Also, recent studies show that brain damage from binge drinking can occur in less than a year.

**Their body size** is smaller causing the alcohol to have a greater impact.

**Their livers** are less able to handle (that means break down) alcohol.

**Kids who start drinking** on their own, on or before age 13, have nearly a 50% chance of developing life-long problems with alcohol.

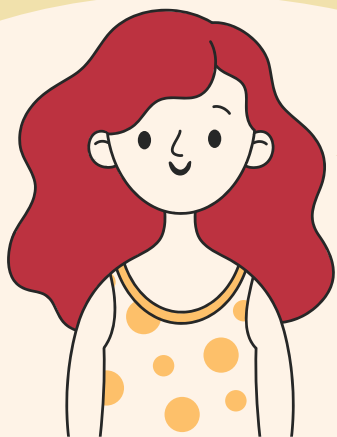
By comparison, people who start when they are 21 or older have only a 10% chance of becoming an alcoholic.

They are more likely to be **pressured by peers** to drink.

They may be more likely to give in to the pressure because they don't want to be seen as different from others.

They are more likely to **THINK they need alcohol** to relax in social situations or to look more mature and independent when out with friends.

# DO ANY OTHER GROUPS FALL UNDER THE "RISKY" CATEGORY?



Bet you guessed the answer would be YES!

## PEOPLE WITH A FAMILY HISTORY OF ALCOHOLISM

These folks are 2 to 4 times more likely to become alcoholic themselves. (That's why it's important for each of us to find out as much as we can about our family history!)

## PEOPLE WHO HAVE UNIQUE REACTIONS:

People who feel "nothing" as well as those that have a **STRONG** reaction after drinking only a little alcohol are both at higher risk. Both groups should reconsider their drinking behavior.

## WOMEN WHO ARE:

Pregnant,  
planning to become pregnant,  
or nursing infants.



## PEOPLE WHOSE HEALTH IS AFFECTED BY:

- Emotional stress
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Medical illness
- Medications

Drinking alcohol while taking ANY Rx or OTC medicine can be very risky.



## PEOPLE WITH MEDICAL PROBLEMS LIKE:

- Diabetes
- Seizures
- Heart problems
- Liver problems
- Other digestive problems
- Nervous system problems

## PEOPLE WHO DRINK TO THE POINT OF "BLACKING OUT"...

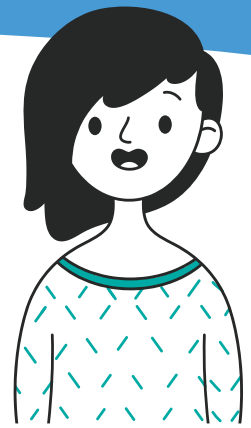
This means they don't remember what happened while drinking, even though they didn't pass out or lose consciousness. Blacking out is dangerous as it means that the brain has been affected. It can also be a sign that more alcohol problems are on the way.



# PEOPLE ALSO NEED TO BE CAREFUL.....

Whenever They Are With Others Who  
Are Drinking Because Of:

- Increased possibility of being pressured by others.
- Increased chance of people actually pressuring themselves because they don't want to be seen as being different from others.
- Increased risk of having other date rape drugs like GHB or Roofies dropped into drinks without your knowledge.
- Increased risk of becoming either a victim OR a perpetrator of sexual violence.
- Increased risk of things just getting out of control: Unfortunately, people often do things in groups that they NEVER would do alone.



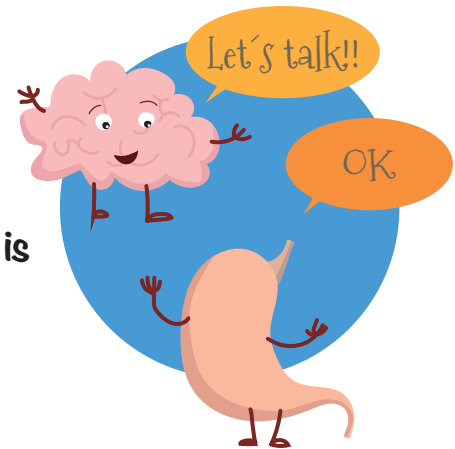
## WHENEVER ALCOHOL AND MARIJUANA ARE BOTH PRESENT:

When someone drinks too much, a toxic compound called acetaldehyde (asset-AL-duh-hide) builds up in the bloodstream. As this compound reaches the brain, the brain sends a signal to the stomach to throw up. This is gross and disgusting, but throwing up means that no more of the poisonous compound can get in to damage the cells.

If a person smokes marijuana while drinking alcohol, the chemicals in marijuana stop the brain from sending the signal to throw up. The result is higher and higher levels of acetaldehyde to the point that the person can pass out, fall into a coma, and possibly even die.

Throwing up, however, isn't always the answer either. When people pass out from drinking too much alcohol, the food and liquid that comes up from their stomach can go down the windpipe and enter the lungs instead. This can result in difficulty breathing, pneumonia...

even death



# IF ALCOHOL CAN CAUSE SO MANY PROBLEMS, WHY WOULD ANYONE EVEN CONSIDER DRINKING?

Here are some reasons why:

- To feel good.
- To stop feeling bad.
- To look cool.
- To be popular.
- To celebrate.
- To relax.
- To feel more sociable.
- For excitement.
- For religious reasons.
- For medical reasons: limited amounts of alcohol are thought to be helpful for some people. However, the relaxing benefits can also be obtained from things such as exercise or meditation.
- To rebel.
- To get drunk or intoxicated.
- Because they are “hooked”: that means addicted.

Also, some people drink because of:

- Low self-esteem & depression.
- Stress & tension.
- Guilt & shame.

These can all be excuses to drink and can make the problem worse.



Do you know the #1 reason  
that kids try alcohol for  
the first time?

Because their friends do.

## Do you know how people can sober up or get over the effects of drinking alcohol??

It's not what you think!

Fresh air and exercise can make a drinker feel more alert.  
Hot black coffee can produce a wide awake drunk.  
Cold water can create a wet drunk.  
Coffee plus a cold shower a wide awake, wet drunk!  
None of these methods work because

it's all up to the liver and it takes the liver 1 hour to  
burn up each drink of alcohol a person has.

TIME is the only remedy!



# IS THIS EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ALCOHOL?

## ALMOST...

### BOTTOM LINE:

Most adults who drink slowly and responsibly (that means they follow all the guidelines mentioned so far), do fine. Drinking can become dangerous when these guidelines are not followed. Dangerous drinking is called “Alcohol Misuse” and it consists of three main categories.



**RISKY DRINKING:** You’ve already read LOTS of examples of this. What’s important to remember is that even though this is only the first level, it can prove absolutely tragic. All you need to think about is the effect on an unborn baby or the innocent victim of a deadly car crash to realize that even one instance of excessive drinking can be catastrophic.

**ALCOHOL ABUSE:** This refers to people who have a pattern of risky drinking that causes problems for them and the people around them. They can suffer health, social, or legal problems; unfortunately, often a combination of all.

**ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE:** Besides causing a variety of problems, people who are addicted to alcohol need to drink more and more to experience the same effects. They also have trouble cutting back and may experience withdrawal symptoms (like sweating, shaking, or even seizures) when they stop drinking. This condition is known as Alcoholism.

## YOU MENTIONED ALCOHOLISM, BUT WHAT EXACTLY IS THAT?

Social drinking turns to Alcoholism when a person’s body **NEEDS** alcohol to function on a daily basis.

Alcoholism is a disease. It’s not a weakness or a crime. It’s a disease that can be treated if the drinker seeks help.

Alcoholism is characterized by uncontrolled drinking...of anything alcoholic, even just beer. That means that each time alcoholics drink, they can’t accurately predict how much or how long they will drink.

About 1 in 10 people who drink develops serious health problems, including alcoholism. Most alcoholics are working family members. Less than 5% are “street people.”

Alcoholism and alcohol-related problems are the 3rd leading cause of death in this country!



I KNOW SOME PEOPLE WHO DRINK.  
HOW CAN I TELL IF THEY ARE ALCOHOLICS???



## WARNING SIGNS!

### of Alcoholism:



- Person has a high tolerance level which means he or she needs to drink more and more to get the same effect.
- Person needs a drink to get over a hangover. This is a sign of withdrawal.
- Person drinks while alone.
- Person loses time from work or school due to drinking.
- Person may start drinking in the morning.
- Person needs a drink at other specific times of the day.
- Person denies, lies about, covers up, or makes excuses about drinking.
- Person has frequent blackouts or memory lapses during or after drinking.
- Person drinks to relieve stress, fear, shyness, and/or insecurity.
- Person's family & friends are ashamed and worried about the drinking. They may even have suggested seeing a doctor or going for help.

## WHERE CAN PEOPLE WHO NEED IT, GO FOR HELP?



Like many chronic diseases, alcoholism is treatable but cannot be cured.  
Recovery is a life-long process which begins with NOT drinking.

There are many organizations and places alcoholics  
and their friends/family can go for help. Among the better known are:

- AA:** Alcoholics Anonymous, a world-wide, self-help group for alcoholics.  
**AI-ANON:** A self-help group for families and friends of alcoholics.  
**ALATEEN:** A self-help group for teens affected by someone else's alcohol use.

For more information, check out [www.al-anon.alateen.org](http://www.al-anon.alateen.org) ... or call toll free  
**1-888-425-2666** to learn about Al-Anon and Alateen meetings in your area.

If you know someone you think might benefit from such services,  
encourage them to speak with school counselors, teachers, doctors, clergy, or  
with whomever they think will be most understanding, knowledgeable, and/or helpful.

# EFFECT OF ALCOHOLISM ON FAMILY AND FRIENDS

When one person has alcoholism, it affects the lives of about 4 to as many as 7 others.

## ALCOHOLISM CAN CAUSE:

- Anger and resentment.
- Insecurity (feeling you can't depend on the alcoholic).
- Denial (not wanting to accept or even admit to themselves that there is a problem).
- Guilt (thinking the problem is their fault).
- People blaming each other for the problem.
- Money problems (drinking is expensive!) some people even lose their jobs.



## FRIENDS AND FAMILY INVOLVED WITH AN ALCOHOLIC SHOULD REMEMBER THE 3 C'S:

1. You did not **cause** the drinking.
2. You cannot **control** it.
3. You cannot **cure** it.

Skilled professionals can help family and friends convince alcoholics to finally admit they have a problem. Only the drinkers themselves can actually control the problem and change their drinking behavior.

## CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS (COAs) ARE SPECIAL PEOPLE

While it's not guaranteed they'll have problems, they do face special risks, such as:

- Becoming alcoholic or developing other drug problems. This is true, in part, because, like many other diseases, alcoholism tends to run in families.
- Marrying alcoholics (and becoming co-dependent).
- Not feeling good about themselves

**BUT** they can reduce their risks by taking care of themselves. This means getting involved in activities they enjoy that let them use their talents or help them learn new skills. The main objective in all this? Keeping busy and productive while having fun!

Help is also available from:

- Al-Anon
- Alateen
- Alcoholics Anonymous (if they also have a drinking problem).
- Any supportive and caring adult, teacher, coach, counselor, neighbor, or relative.

# AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS A PARENT WITH A DRINKING PROBLEM?

There are 15 million+ alcoholics in the United States!

To get better, alcoholics need to stop drinking. However, even if they're not ready to stop yet, there ARE things people who care about them CAN do.



NO WAY!!

## QUICK TIPS!

### FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF ALCOHOLICS

#### DON'T

- Argue with the alcoholic.
- Make threats.
- Try to control the other person's drinking.
- Protect drinkers from the consequences of their drinking.
- Take it personally. Just because alcoholics have a disease doesn't mean they don't care about you!

#### DO

**Learn the facts** about alcoholism (perhaps through self-help group meetings).

**Be direct** when talking to the alcoholic about his or her behavior, but hold discussions only when the drinker is sober (not drunk).

**Offer support** in getting the alcoholic help.

**Remember that alcoholism is a disease.** It's not something "bad" or "weak" people do.

Understand that **asking for help** is a sign of wisdom & strength.

Last but by no means least, **take care of yourself** (like by having fun with friends).



# HOW COME SOME PEOPLE HAVE PROBLEMS WITH ALCOHOL AND OTHERS DON'T?

Some people inherit **GENES** for alcohol addiction from their parents, kind of like genes for disease or diabetes ... or brown eyes or red hair. Scientists think that genes can only explain part of the problem. Even the way genes work depends on stuff that happens around you ... that happens to the people, places, and things in your environment.

That's not any easy question. There are a lot of things that can come into play.



Some people have **PERSONALITY TRAITS** that can make problems with alcohol more likely. For example, some people like to act spontaneously. And when people act without first thinking things through, they're more likely to take risks and make unsafe (even dangerous!) choices. Other people may be shy and use alcohol to try to feel brave. (That's not a good idea either!)

Also, different kinds of **FAMILY PROBLEMS** can play a part. Kids can learn how to misuse alcohol from their parents, or they can use alcohol to try to escape from bad situations at home.

Additionally, kids that have **FRIENDS THAT DRINK** are more likely to drink themselves. (See pages 10 and 12 in this lesson for information about "Self Pressure." See the Decision-Making lesson for good ideas on how to handle "Peer Pressure").

The **NEIGHBORHOODS** people live in seem to add to drinking problems too. Scientists have found, for example, that very poor neighborhoods and those that are in high-crime areas tend to have more alcohol-related problems, like fights and accidents. Neighborhoods that have lots of bars and liquor stores (and other places that sell alcohol) have similar problems. — If you think about it, it makes sense. The easier it is to get something, the more likely people are to buy more of it!



That's why raising the price of alcohol (through increased taxes, for example), limiting the days and hours that stores and bars are open, and keeping bars and stores from being too close together have been shown to help cut down on the amount of alcohol-related problems. All of these are examples of "Environmental Strategies" that have been demonstrated to work.

# DO ANY OTHER FACTORS PLAY A PART IN CAUSING PEOPLE TO HAVE ALCOHOL PROBLEMS?

## SURE !

The **MINIMUM LEGAL DRINKING AGE** (how old you have to be before you can buy alcohol) is important, too. Back in the 1970s, many states lowered the age from 21 to 18 or 19, and this, unfortunately, resulted in more car crashes and injuries. When they moved it back to age 21, the number of car crashes and other injuries dropped. Places that are strict about the drinking age tend to have fewer alcohol-related problems.

**Alcohol companies** deserve their share of the blame too. For example, a few years ago they dreamed up alcopops: sweet, fizzy drinks that taste like soda but have alcohol in them.



Alcopops are dangerous because they make drinking easier for young people. Since teens tend to prefer the sweet taste of alcopops to the stronger taste of beer or liquor, they're likely to drink more of it. In addition, kids are exposed to a lot of alcopop ads. According to some studies, teenage girls are more likely than adult women to even come across ads for alcopops!



The alcohol companies also market their products in irresponsible ways, like selling huge, 40 oz. containers of malt liquor (which is stronger than beer) and then treating it like it's a single serving...when it really equals at least 4!

The fact is that 10 to 20 percent of all alcohol sold in the U.S. is consumed by underage youth. That adds up to a lot of \$\$\$, which may explain why many alcohol companies don't do more to stop underage drinking. Sometimes they even actively try to block policies that have been shown to work.

Last, but not least, the **MEDIA** can make things worse. Alcohol ads make drinking look cool and fun. They never show the bad things that can happen, like car crashes or cancer. Some ads even include cute animals and cartoon characters to attract younger audiences.

The same happens when drinking is shown in the wrong way (as cool, fun, having no consequences) on TV or in movies. Kids who see more drinking in movies tend to drink more themselves.





THAT'S THE BAD NEWS ABOUT WHAT CAUSES  
ALCOHOL PROBLEMS. SO WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

YOU ARE

HOW CAN THAT BE?



Scientists have found that good **ALCOHOL POLICIES**: rules and regulations at school, at jobs, and in the community — can really work to lessen alcohol problems. Policies can't change unless people work to change them. That's why it's so important for **YOU** to get involved. **YOU** can change the world and make it a better place!

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS ON HOW TO DO THAT:

- 1 If you see or hear an alcohol ad that you think is aimed at kids: whether it's on TV, the radio, the Internet, a magazine, a billboard, anywhere – do something about it. Write a letter, send an e-mail, or pay a visit to the TV station, the company that makes the alcohol, and/or your local leaders. Respectfully tell them that the ads are inappropriate and you want them removed. Make your case stronger by documenting the ad. Write down details like the time of day you heard it on station XYZ on the radio. If it's appropriate, also take a picture.
- 2 Call, write to, or visit your leaders (in your town, city, state, or Washington, D.C.). Let them know that alcohol problems worry you and you want something done about them. Teach them about alcohol policies that work. You might even know more about the subject than they do!
- 3 Get involved with a youth group that is working to make your community safer and happier by putting good alcohol policies in place. Ask your teacher or advisor to help you find a project where you can do good and have fun at the same time.

## HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF KIDS WHO HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE!



**LYDIA ENCINIAS**, an eighth grader in Pojoaque, New Mexico was trying to decide on a school project about drugs when she noticed a couple of beer billboards near her school. Lydia thought it didn't make sense for her school and community to be spending a lot of money fighting drug use while billboards right across from the school were pushing drinking. She decided to do something about it.

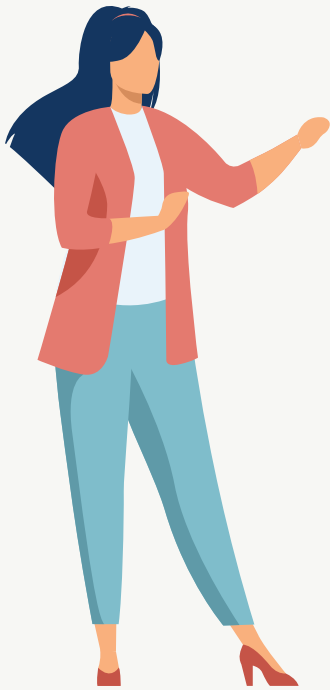
First, she rounded up a couple of sixth-grade school mates to help. Then she researched the issue, talked to the right people, and got people to sign a petition. Soon, the manager of the billboard company took down the beer ads. The newspaper in her city put the story on the front page.

**A leadership class** in Pryor, Oklahoma knew that underage drinking parties where adults were providing the alcohol were a problem in their town. So they went to the mayor and asked that a "social host" law be passed. (A social host law punishes adults who give alcohol to a young person who is not their own child.) They worked hard, calling each person on the City Council at least 3 times! Eventually their efforts paid off – the City Council passed the law!

**JUSTIN KIMBER**, a junior at Bishop Ludden Junior-Senior High School in Syracuse, New York – and a member of the Heart of New York Teen Institute – was concerned about the appeal of alcohol energy drinks such as Sparks and Tilt. These drinks are like Red Bull or Monster, but with alcohol added. He saw that they came in cans that looked like regular energy drinks or soda, were very cheap, and included ingredients that shouldn't go together. So he wrote a piece for the teen section of the Syracuse newspaper to alert people about the problem.

This is called **MEDIA ADVOCACY** – using the media to bring attention to a problem in order to make it better.

# SO, WHAT HAVE YOU NOTICED IN YOUR COMMUNITY THAT COULD USE SOME IMPROVEMENT?



If nothing specific comes to mind, pretend you're an undercover reporter on special assignment. Go about your normal life, keeping your eyes (and ears) wide open. Look to see if helpful alcohol policies and practices are happening in your town.

If you see (or hear) something you think is good, let the people responsible know.

If you see (or hear) something that doesn't seem quite right, discuss it both with the adults and other kids in your life.

If you find something you really think needs fixing, talk to your friends. Brainstorm what might be done about it. Make a list of adults who would be willing to help and then get started.

## BOTTOM LINE



Whatever the outcome, you're in for a fascinating learning experience. If it actually works, please let us know so we can consider sharing it through our drug awareness newsletter, website, or lesson(s).



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