

For Teens: Know the Risks of Alcohol

Alcohol is the drug most widely abused by kids. It's cheap, available, and many kids see their parents drinking at home. Some kids drink only on weekends, but then they "party" pretty hard. A lot of kids don't think of alcohol as a drug, and don't know the health and personal risks of using alcohol. What do you risk if you drink?

Your health risks

You don't have to get drunk to become impaired. Any drinking slows your reaction time, limits vision, and puts you at high risk of a car accident (a common cause of death in teenagers). And the more you drink over the years, the greater your risk of liver disease, kidney and heart damage, and cancer.

Your personal risks

If you're hung over after drinking, you can't compete well at sports or concentrate for a test. If you rely on alcohol to relax, you may do things that embarrass you later. You also risk losing your better judgment and self-discipline. You may have sex, for instance, when you don't really want to.

Why some kids drink

Here are some reasons for drinking:

- "A few beers help me feel good, relax, and forget the things I usually worry about."
- "All the guys in my crowd drink. It impresses the girls, how much we can drink."
- "There's always drinking at our parties. I drink so other people won't think I'm weird."

What really happens

Here are the results of drinking:

- "Drinking felt good at first, but then I noticed I felt just as bad—usually worse—afterward."
- "My girlfriend says it bothers her when the guys drink. She goes home with her friends."
- "If I drink at a party, I feel out of control. I think the kids who get drunk are weird, not me."