

Why Alcohol is Harmful

You may not think of alcohol as a drug, but it is. A drug is a chemical substance that is taken to cause changes in a person's body or behavior.

What is Alcohol?

Alcohol is a DRUG that is produced by a chemical REACTION in FRUITS, vegetables, and GRAINS. Alcohol refers to a CLASS of chemical compounds. One of these compounds is ETHANOL, the active INGREDIENT in alcoholic BEVERAGES. Ethanol is a DRUG and also TOXIN. However, when alcohol is DILUTED enough, and taken in SMALL amounts it produces PLEASURABLE effects on the body. Like other ADDICTIVE drugs, ALCOHOL produces a feeling of EUPHORIA, changes in MOOD, relieves PAIN and eases TENSION. These EFFECTS are obtained at some RISK, but many TEENS are UNAWARE of the risks involved. This lack of KNOWLEDGE is just one REASON that ALCOHOL is the most widely used and ABUSED drug in our SOCIETY.

Alcohol a Depressant

Alcohol ACTS as a powerful DEPRESSANT. A DEPRESSANT is a drug that SLOWS down the body's FUNCTIONS and REACTIONS. In slowing the body's REACTIONS, alcohol may also cause CONFUSION, decreased ALERTNESS, poor COORDINATION, blurred VISION and sleepiness. The depressant EFFECTS of alcohol are very STRONG. If a person drinks enough or LARGE amounts of alcohol, you're VITAL bodily functions such as HEARTBEAT and BREATHING can be seriously AFFECTED and even cause DEATH.

Teens and Alcohol

For TEENS and others under the age of 21, using alcohol is AGAINST the law. As a teenager you are still GROWING and DEVELOPING. Studies have shown that alcohol can INTERFERE with both your SHORT-term and LONG-term GROWTH. Alcohol can also AFFECT the BRAINS ability to LEARN and to remember. Teens who CONSUME alcohol are more likely to FALL behind in school, have TROUBLE with RELATIONSHIPS and the law.

Whether drinking is a CAUSE or a SYMPTOM, teens who drink have DIFFICULTIES with their FAMILIES, friends and the POLICE. This situation becomes CIRCULAR, meaning that if you had some problems at HOME in the first place, and then STARTED drinking, the drinking would probably LEAD to more FAMILY problems.

Why Teens Shouldn't Drink

Even though it's ILLEGAL to drink alcohol, most teens have ACCESS to alcohol or will at least be EXPOSED to it or have FRIENDS who drink. It is therefore up to YOU to make a personal DECISION not to drink.

Although most TEENS drink alcohol in order to FIT in or look COOL, they often end up doing FOOLISH things due to the fact they are DRUNK and may end up being EMBARRASSED the next day having done or SAID something that they REGRET. Also, the next day you may suffer a HANGOVER, a term that's used to describe the AFTER effects of drinking too MUCH alcohol. The SYMPTOMS of a hangover include NAUSEA, upset STOMMACH, headache and SENSITIVITY to light and noise.

Drinking can also INTERFERE with you SOCIAL life, sports and SCHOOL work. Also, your PARENTS most likely will DISAPPROVE of you drinking, and this can RESULT in punishment and GROUNDINGS. As well, it has been found that ALCOHOL can REDUCE your INHABITIONS and self-control. Teens who DRINK

end up being more SEXUALLY active and having more UNPROTECTED sex with PARTNERS that they do not know. This may result in PREGNANCY and sexually transmitted DISEASES which could then end up in DEATH.

Also, teens who drink may get seriously HURT or even DIE. The use of alcohol GREATLY increases the CHANCE that a teen will be INVOLVED in a car ACCIDENT, homicide, RAPE, or suicide.

Beating Peer Pressure

When STRESSFUL situations arise and peer PRESSURE kicks into high gear, it's very EASY to get CAUGHT up in the moment and FORGET that you will have to LIVE with the CHOICES you make. If you GIVE in and do something that goes against your VALUES, what you BELIEVE in most, it will cause you DISTRESS later and you will feel REGRET. When PEER pressure rears its ugly head, try to FOCUS on how you FEEL about what is HAPPENING rather than getting CAUGHT up in the crowd. Always STAND up for what you think is RIGHT. Remember, PEER pressure can WIN only if you let it.