

WHAT TEENAGERS WANT TO KNOW ABOUT ALCOHOL

DID YOU KNOW?

- Alcohol can be deadly. If you drink a quart of vodka at one sitting, it can kill you (drinking games).
- Alcohol is a powerful depressant. It slows breathing and heart rate and lowers blood pressure.
- Once you drink, nothing sobers you up but time, one hour for each ounce of alcohol consumed (whether a mixed drink, a can of beer, or a glass of wine).
- Alcohol-related car crashes are a leading cause of death to teenagers.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A PERSON DRINKS ALCOHOL?

The first thing that happens is *loss of judgment* (this can happen with only one drink). It could mean:

- Drinking and deciding to drive, or getting into a car with someone who has been drinking.
- Drinking and deciding to do something you later regret (have sex, do something physically dangerous, steal).

The next thing that happens when you drink is *loss of coordination* (this can happen with two or three beers). It could mean:

- Getting into a car crash and hurting yourself or other people.
- Losing your balance and falling, or going swimming and drowning.

If you drink regularly (like partying on weekends), drinking may *interfere with your ability to cope with emotions*. This means:

- Drinking every time you feel nervous in social situations (party, date).
Result: you don't learn how to feel less nervous without drinking.
- Drinking every time you feel angry, depressed, bored, or lonely.
Result: you don't learn how to cope with these feelings without the aid of alcohol.

WHAT CAN HAPPEN IF YOU DRINK REGULARLY OVER TIME?

- Addiction. Alcohol is mentally and physically addicting. This means that you need to drink in order to feel okay. *Alcoholism* is the word used for addiction to alcohol.
- Liver damage, nerve damage, brain damage.
- Death.

WHO DRINKS? WHO BECOMES AN ALCOHOLIC?

- Many adults don't drink alcohol at all.
- Of the adults who drink alcohol, three out of every ten drink regularly and one out of ten will become an alcoholic.
- The more a teenager drinks over time, the *more likely it is that he or she will become an alcoholic*.
- Even if you are not an alcoholic, heavy drinking can hurt your family, your life at school, and your friendships.
- Teenagers who come from families in which a family member is an alcoholic are twice as likely to become alcoholics themselves.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS THAT A TEENAGER COULD BE DEPENDENT ON ALCOHOL?

- Drinking every day.
- Drinking regularly to relieve shyness, anger, fear.
- Drinking in the morning.
- Drinking alone regularly.
- Needing a drink at a certain time every day.
- Having a loss of memory during or after drinking.
- Becoming more moody or irritable after drinking.

Even if only one of these signs applies to you, you could be in danger of becoming alcohol dependent.

IF A PREGNANT WOMAN DRINKS ALCOHOL, HER BABY MAY BE BORN WITH BIRTH DEFECTS OR NERVE DAMAGE.

- Doctors advise pregnant women not to drink.
- Even women who are planning to become pregnant should not drink. By the time women find out they are pregnant, they may already be 6-8 weeks or more pregnant.