Family Pages

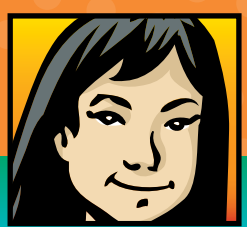
REACH OUT NOW:

FACTS AND ACTIVITIES TO HELP PREVENT UNDERAGE ALCOHOL USE

INSIDE:

FACTS

ACTIVITIES



TIPS FOR PARENTS

RESOURCES

Dear Families:

Welcome to ***Reach Out Now***, a program developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention and Scholastic Inc. for teachers and families, to help prevent underage alcohol use. This Family Resource Guide is one part of the program designed to give youth the facts about alcohol so they can make smart and healthy choices in the future.

You may think it is too early to talk with your 10- or 11-year-old about alcohol use. Most fifth and sixth graders don't drink alcohol. But they may already have access to alcohol and may already be facing situations in which they need to make decisions about alcohol. The good news is that you have more influence on your child's decision to drink before he or she uses alcohol.[1]

It may not be easy to start a conversation with your child about alcohol use. But the following pages will give you tips and help guide you through starting a discussion about this sensitive topic. We hope that you will share the activities inside with your child. The benefits of communicating about the risks of alcohol can last a lifetime.

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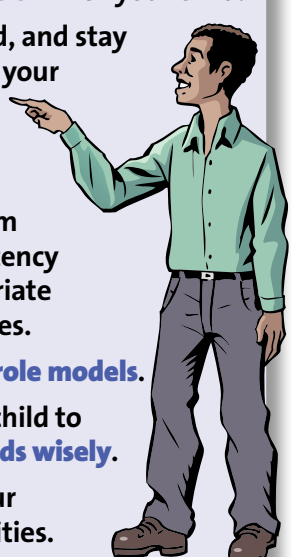
RADM, USPHS
Acting Surgeon General
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

SIX KEY ACTIONS Parents and Caregivers Can Take to Prevent Childhood Alcohol Abuse[2]

- Establish and maintain **good communication** with your child.
- Get involved, and stay **involved**, in your child's life.
- Make **clear rules** and enforce them with consistency and appropriate consequences.
- Be **positive role models**.
- Teach your child to **choose friends wisely**.
- **Monitor** your child's activities.



1. NIAAA, "Making a Difference: Talk to Your Child About Alcohol," revised 2006.
2. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (SAMHSA/CSAP), *SAMHSA News*, March/April 2007, vol. 15, no. 2.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
www.samhsa.gov

Using This Guide

This page provides tips and resources to help you talk with your child about underage drinking. After reading the material below, use the activities on the next two pages to start a discussion with your child about alcohol.

Provide a Clear Message About Alcohol:

Research shows that youth are less likely to drink and have fewer alcohol-related problems when their parents discipline them and set clear expectations about alcohol.[3] Below are some tips on how to provide a clear and consistent message about alcohol in the home.

- **Discuss family rules about alcohol.** Make it clear that it is your expectation that your children will not use alcohol if they are underage. Enforce the rules that you set.
- **Discuss the laws about underage drinking.** Make it clear that drinking under the age of 21 is against the law.
- **Teach your children about the dangers** of underage drinking.
- **Monitor alcohol in your home.** Make sure that alcohol is not available at parties given by your children in your home.
- **Think carefully about what to tell children** about your own experiences, if any, in using alcohol as a teen. If you were an underage drinker, share lessons that you learned from that experience. Be sure to explain that the decision to take part in underage drinking was not a good idea then, and it is not a good idea now.
- **If you drink yourself, be sure to drink responsibly** around your children. Don't drink and drive. Consider not serving alcohol at parties that include your children.
- **Help your children find ways to have fun** with their friends that don't involve alcohol.
- **Help your children get professional help** if you think they may be abusing alcohol.

Activity Directions:

Activity 1: Get the Facts About Alcohol
Have your child take the quiz and read through the answers. Sit down with your child to go over the questions and answers. Discuss: *Were any of the answers surprising? Why is it helpful to know the facts about the effects of alcohol?*

Activity 2: Making Smart Choices
This activity provides two scenarios that your child might face in which he or she needs to make a decision about alcohol. Sit down with your child and discuss how you might react if you were in that situation. What facts about the effects of alcohol would support your decision? It's important to acknowledge that it is not always easy to say "No" to your friends. Brainstorm different techniques that your child might use to get out of a risky situation.

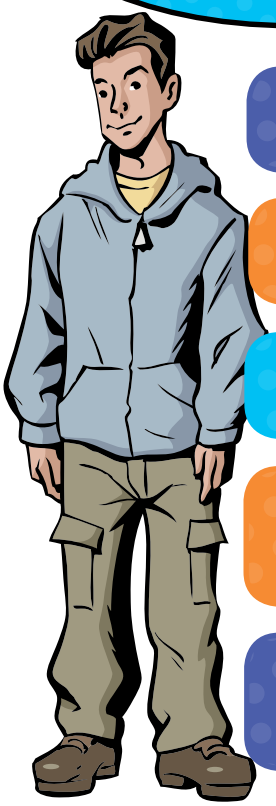
For more information, check out these resources:

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): *http://www.samhsa.gov*
- Too Smart to Start: *http://www.toosmarttostart.samhsa.gov*
- SAMHSA's Health Information Network (SHIN): *877-SAMHSA-7 (877-726-4727)* (*TDD 800-487-4889*; linea gratis en español *877-767-8432*). *http://www.samhsa.gov/shin*
- Underage Drinking Portal of Federal Resources: *http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov*
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA): *http://www.niaaa.nih.gov*
- The Cool Spot: *http://www.thecoolspot.gov*
- U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools: *http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/index.html*
- *Start Talking Before They Start Drinking: A Family Guide: http://www.family.samhsa.gov/media/familyguide/Underagebrochure_10_27_released_2.pdf*
- *The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking: A Guide to Action for Families: http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/underagedrinking/FamilyGuide.pdf*
- *http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/MakeADiff_HTML/makediff.htm*

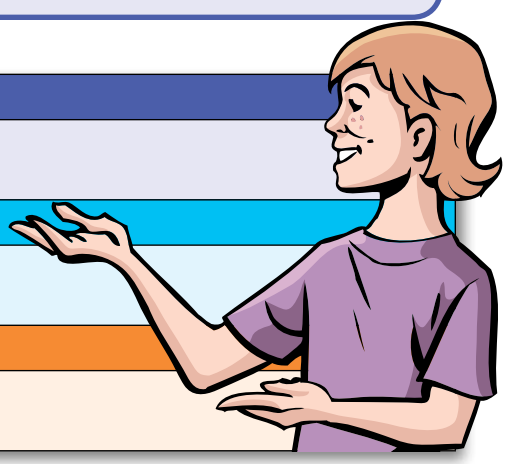
3. Hawkins JD, Graham JW, Maguin E, et al. 1997. Exploring the Effects of Age of Alcohol Use Initiation and Psychosocial Risk Factors on Subsequent Alcohol Misuse. Journal of Studies on Alcohol 58 (3): 280-290.

Get the Facts About Alcohol

How much do you really know about how alcohol can affect your brain and your body? Take this true or false quiz to find out. *The answers may surprise you!*



1	When a person drinks alcohol, it travels through nearly every organ system in his or her body.	True False
2	Drinking alcohol can affect the way your brain works.	True False
3	Alcohol affects every person in the same way.	True False
4	Beer is less harmful to the body than other types of alcohol.	True False
5	Heavy alcohol use over a long period of time may increase a person's risk for getting some types of cancer.	True False



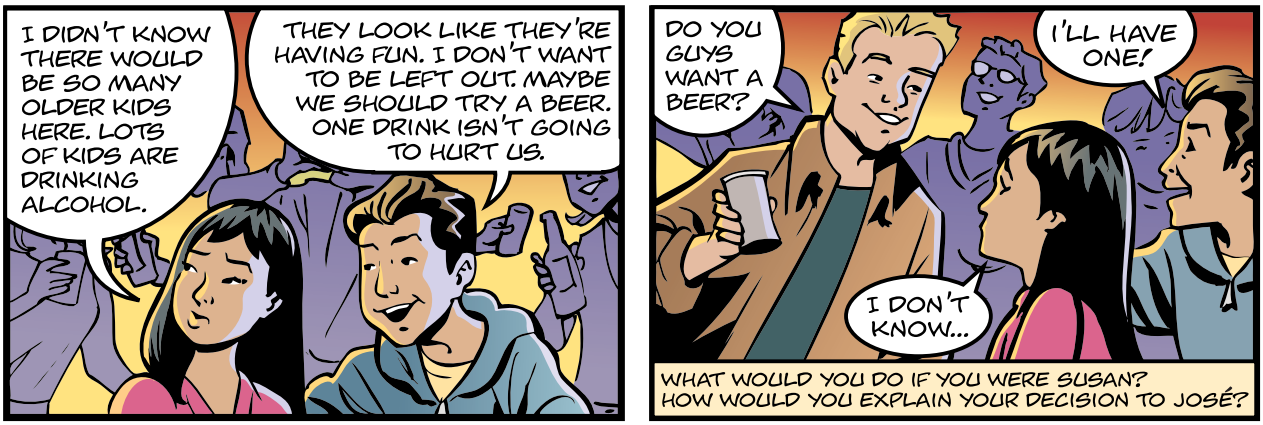
5 correct	**Congratulations!**
You are a champion of mastering the facts.	
3 – 4 correct	**On your way to mastering the facts!**
You have a good grasp of the facts.	
0 – 2 correct	**We know you are "too smart to start."**
Continue to learn the facts.	

1. Answer: True. Alcohol enters your bloodstream within 5 to 10 minutes of being consumed. It passes from your stomach into your bloodstream and then travels throughout your entire body—affecting nearly every organ system in the body. **2. Answer:** True. Alcohol slows the processes in your brain that allow you to think and move. Alcohol can affect your ability to make decisions; research suggests that some of these effects may be long-lasting. **3. Answer:** False. How alcohol affects a person depends on a number of factors. For example: *Weight:* The same amount of alcohol more strongly affects a person who weighs less than a heavier person; *Youth:* Because their bodies are still developing, young people are more at risk to some types of alcohol damage; *Gender:* The same amount of alcohol typically affects women more than it does men. **4. Answer:** False. There is the same amount of alcohol in a 12-ounce beer as there is in 1.5 ounces of hard liquor. The alcohol in beer and wine can be just as harmful as the alcohol in other drinks. **5. Answer:** True. Alcohol abuse can cause damage in some organs in the body that may lead to cancer, including stomach cancer.

Making SMART Choices

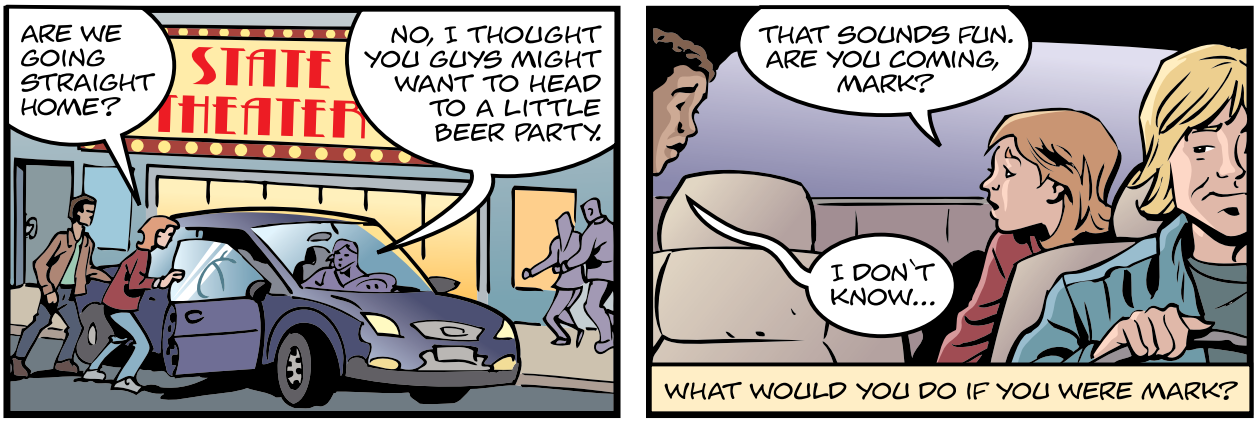
The pressure to fit in with your peers can sometimes cause you to make decisions you later regret. Thinking about how you will react before a situation occurs may help you make smarter decisions when it does happen. Consider the following scenarios. What would you say if you were the characters in the stories? What would you do to remove yourself from a potentially harmful situation?

1. Susan and José are at a party with older teens. Some of the people at the party are drinking.



On a separate sheet of paper, explain: What would you do if you were Susan? How would you explain your decision to José?

2. Mark and Sally are waiting for Sally's older brother to pick them up.



On a separate sheet of paper, explain: What would you do if you were Mark?

Take It Further!

What are some other scenarios that you might encounter that involve alcohol? Brainstorm ways in which you might respond in each of those cases.

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SAMHSA
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