



SaveBrains.org

# Alcohol Damages the Teenage Brain

**Parents  
are the  
#1  
influence  
in a  
teen's  
decision  
not to  
drink.**

## What YOU Can Do To Prevent Underage Drinking

- Eat dinner together regularly.
- Be caring and supportive.
- Maintain open lines of communication.
- Set no-drinking rules and consequences. Be consistent with them.
- Surround your child with positive role models.
- Teens need parents to be parents, not drinking partners.
- Keep track of the alcohol in your home. Count it and lock it up.
- Check in with your teens about their plans and ask about alcohol.
- Be up and ready at curfew; talk with your teens about their night.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of alcohol abuse. If problems occur, get help promptly.

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A human brain takes about 23-25 years to fully develop.

**Latest studies show that alcohol damages the teenage brain.**

The brain hippocampus (responsible for learning and memory) can be 10% smaller in underage drinkers.

Alcohol use interrupts normal brain “wiring” by slowing down brain activity and development.



Alcohol interferes with storing new information as memories.

## When adults provide alcohol or allow underage drinking it actually results in:

- more drinking outside the home
- more alcohol related problems
- more involvement in other high risk behaviors

Most alcoholics in America began drinking before age 18.

11% of all alcohol is consumed by 12 to 20 year olds in the U.S.

A majority of sexual assaults are alcohol-related.

## The Myths and Realities of Underage Drinking

**Myth:** “Teens are going to drink anyway – it’s a rite of passage.”

**Reality:** Most teens do NOT drink. 70% of high school students and 93% middle school students said that they do not drink alcoholic beverages.

Misperceptions that “everybody’s doing it” actually make youth more likely to drink. On the other hand, when these misperceptions are corrected, and teens realize that “NOT everybody’s doing it”, they are less likely to drink alcohol.

**Myth:** “It’s better for kids to start drinking young, so they learn how to handle it.”

**Reality:** The teenage brain is still developing – especially the part of the brain that deals with decision-making. Underage drinking places teens at a higher risk for academic failure, depression, suicide, sexual assault, teen pregnancy, and other substance abuse. Young drinkers are also more likely to develop alcohol dependence.

**Myth:** “It’s safer for teens to drink at my home than elsewhere.”

**Reality:** Adult supervised drinking actually results in more overall drinking in places other than home. Also, serving alcohol to anyone under 21 is illegal, putting you at risk for criminal charges and civil lawsuits, especially if someone is injured or property is damaged.

**Myth:** “In Europe, teens drink more responsibly than in the U.S. because they start drinking younger.”

**Reality:** European teens actually drink and get drunk more often than American teens and have higher rates of alcohol related problems.