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SP491-B-Teen Alcohol and Drug Use

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What to Know About

SP491-B

Teen Alcohol and Other Drug Use

A PUBLICATION FOR PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH ADOLESCENTS AND THE PARENTS OF ADOLESCENTS

National Trends

In today's society, alcohol is the most widely accepted and used drug of choice. Nearly 90 percent of American high school seniors report having used alcohol at some time during their life. In one national study, four in five students reported alcohol use in the past year, and nearly one third reported having gotten drunk within two weeks of being surveyed.

Rates of alcohol and other drug use are much higher among homeless or troubled youth (e.g., those who have run away from home, who are chronically truant or who have dropped out of school).

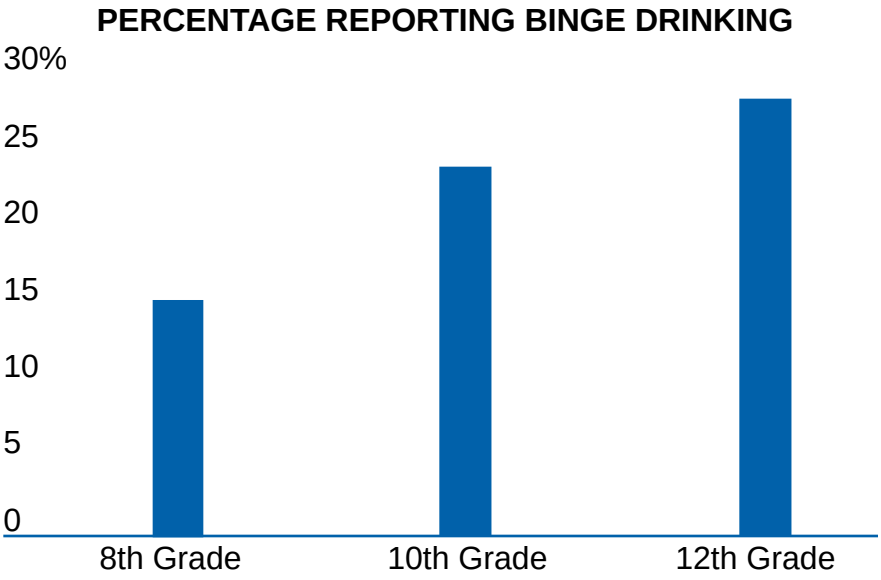
Alcohol and other drug use are related to criminal and violent behavior, teen sexual intercourse and pregnancies, and automobile accidents among youth. Alcohol-related accidents are the leading cause of death among teenagers and young adults. In 1994 alone, one third of all deaths among persons ages 15-24 resulted from automobile accidents involving alcohol use or abuse.

In 1994, more than half of adolescents involved in alcohol- related accidents were intoxicated.

Written by: Kathleen Boyce Rodgers,
Former Assistant Professor, Family Life

Binge Drinking Is a Serious Drug Problem in the Eighth Grade

Use of 5 or more drinks in a row in past 2 weeks, 1994



Source: Monitoring the Future Study, University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, December 1994, unpublished data, In Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for a New Century (1995). Used with permission from the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development.

About Tennessee Teens

The 1995 Youth Risk Behavior Survey revealed that 76 percent of Tennessee high school students surveyed report having used alcohol. Forty percent reported having smoked marijuana, and 6 percent have used some form of cocaine.

Other research conducted in 1995 by the Community Health Research Group at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, revealed alcohol as the most frequently used substance among Tennessee teens. Among the 76,000 9th - 12th grade students in 106 high schools, one in 3 (34 percent) said they drink alcohol. Nine percent of the students surveyed in this study reported use of inhalants within one to five days of being surveyed.

Forty-five percent of youth surveyed reported they have consumed alcohol within the last month before being surveyed, and 27 percent reported having consumed alcohol to the point of drunkenness (five drinks in a row).

Records of juvenile court offenses in Tennessee reveal a steady increase in underage alcohol possession, drinking and drunkenness between 1984 and 1994. Between 1991 and 1994 referrals for drug-related offenses increased by 12 percent.

Much research has been done to better understand factors associated with alcohol use and abuse among teens.

We Know From Research That ...

- The earlier teens begin experimenting with alcohol and other drugs, the more likely they will have problems in later adolescence.
- Teens who view alcohol and other drugs favorably are at greater risk of using these substances.
- Teens who have a poor relationship with their parents are more likely to use or abuse alcohol and other drugs.
- Boys who are aggressive at age 5-7 are at higher risk of drug use and delinquency in adolescence.
- Teens are more likely to drink alcohol or use other drugs if they *believe* their peers are doing so.
- Teens are more likely to use alcohol or other drugs if their parents or the community they live in tolerate underage drinking or other drug use.
- Teens who do poorly and dislike school are more likely to use alcohol and other drugs.

What Can Parents Do?

Monitor your teenagers' behavior. Monitoring does not mean being intrusive, but rather, keeping an eye out for where your teens are, what they're doing and who they are with.

Talk with your teen about the risks involved in using alcohol and other drugs.

Set a good example. Show your teen it is possible to have a good time, or relax, without using alcohol or other drugs.

Let your teens know your expectations regarding their use of alcohol and other drugs.

Involve your teens in decisions about the rules they are expected to follow and the consequences for violating those rules. Teens are more likely to obey rules if they have a say in them and in the consequences.

Encourage your teen to practice healthy behaviors such as exercising, eating healthy foods and driving safely.

Stay informed. Find out what you need to know about alcohol and other drug use. This fact sheet lists some resources for more information.

Books for parents:
Steinberg, L. & Levine, A. *You and Your Adolescent: A Parent's Guide for Ages 10-20.* New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1990.

Perkins, W. & Perkins, N. *Raising Drug-Free Kids In A Drug-Filled World.* New York: Hazelden, 1986.

Schaeffer, D. *Choices and Consequences: What to Do When A Teenager Uses Alcohol/Drugs.* Minneapolis, MN: Johnson Institute Books, 1987.

Local Resources:
Local physician or nurse practitioner
School guidance counselor or nurse
County extension home economist, Agricultural Extension Service

State Resources:
AL-ANON and ALATEEN offers self-help recovery programs for families and friends of alcoholics.

Knoxville: 423-631-4151 Chattanooga: 423-757-5833
Memphis: 901-278-5953 Nashville: 615-385-4404

National Resources:
Students for a Drug-Free America (SDFA). P.O. Box 111948, Nashville, TN 37222-9940. Phone: 615-210-6562, FAX: 615-832-0054.

Partnership for a Drug-Free America. http://www.drugfreeamerica.org/

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information. 1776 East Jefferson St., Rockville, MD 20852

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Bogenschneider, K., Small, S., & Riley, D. (1990). An Ecological Risk Focused Approach for addressing youth-at-risk issues. National Extension Youth-At-Risk Summitt, Washington, DC .

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Agricultural Extension Service
Billy G. Hicks, Dean