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**References:**

- <sup>1</sup>American Medical Assn. report on "Harmful Consequences of Alcohol Use on the Brains of Children, Adolescents, and College Students," 2003 Fact Sheet, [http://www.alertlabs.org/documents/Website\\_AMA\\_Brain\\_Damage.pdf](http://www.alertlabs.org/documents/Website_AMA_Brain_Damage.pdf); Institutes of Medicine National Research Council, "Reducing Underage Drinking: a Collective Responsibility," 13, 14.
- <sup>2</sup><http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyid=122765890>
- <sup>3</sup>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Prevention Talk," Issue Number 14.
- <sup>4</sup>"The NSDUH Report," November 22, 2004.
- <sup>5</sup>"Utah Student Health and Risk Prevention Survey," 2013, <http://dsamh.utah.gov/sharp.htm>
- <sup>6</sup>Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, Columbia University, "Cigarettes, Alcohol, Marijuana: Gateways to Illicit Drug Use," 1994.
- <sup>7</sup>The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, "National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse X: Teens and Parents," August 2005.
- <sup>8</sup>Hawkins JD., J.W. Graham, E. Maguin et al, *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 1997, 58(3):280-290.
- <sup>9</sup><http://www.family.samhsa.gov/talk/encouragement>
- <sup>10</sup><http://www.casafamilyday.org>
- <sup>11</sup><http://www.family.samhsa.gov/teach>
- <sup>12</sup>"Utah Student Health and Risk Prevention Survey," 2013.
- <sup>13</sup>[www.afterschoolalliance.org/research%20factsheets%202010/fact\\_sheet\\_afterschool\\_essential\\_3\\_22\\_2010.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/research%20factsheets%202010/fact_sheet_afterschool_essential_3_22_2010.pdf)

For more information on prevention and treatment, contact the Utah Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health **801-538-3939**.



For more proven skills and activities to keep your child from using alcohol, visit [ParentsEmpowered.org](http://ParentsEmpowered.org).



# PREVENTING UNDERAGE DRINKING

## WHAT A PARENT CAN DO

Facts and tips to protect your kids from the harms of alcohol.



# ALCOHOL AND THE DEVELOPING BRAIN

## ALCOHOL CAN DAMAGE DEVELOPING WHITE MATTER

In a recent study, white matter—the part that transmits signals—developed abnormally in teens who binge drank. Transmitting signals is a big part of what the brain does, which could impair learning and memory.<sup>2</sup>

## THE HIPPOCAMPUS

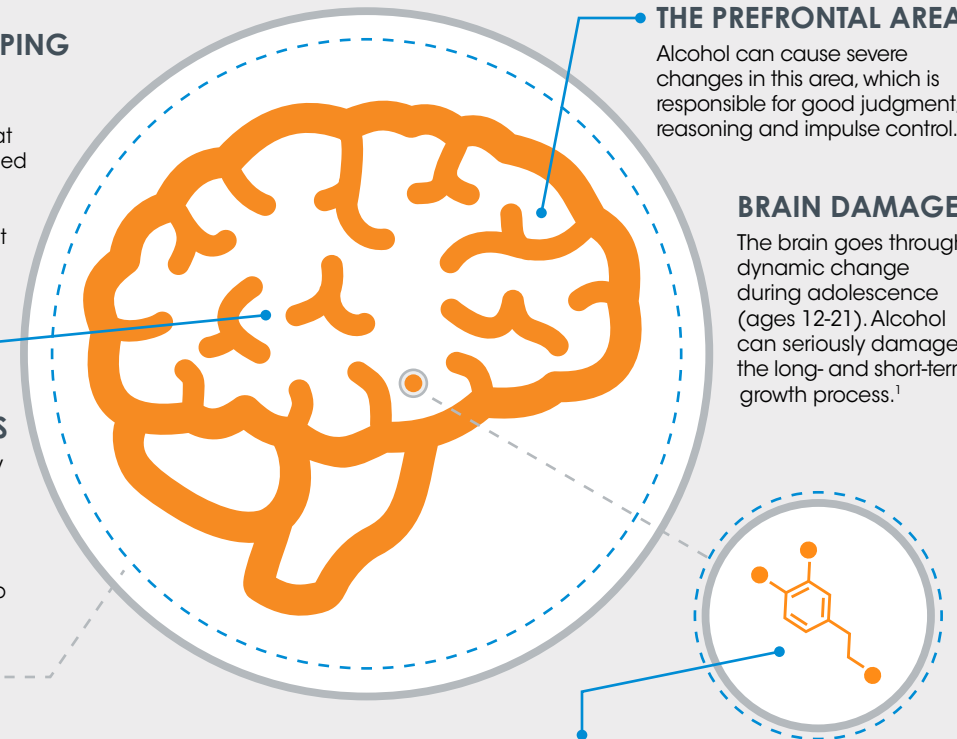
Alcohol can dramatically impact long-term memory and learning skills. The hippocampus was found to be 10% smaller among teens who drank more and longer.<sup>1</sup>

## THE PREFRONTAL AREA

Alcohol can cause severe changes in this area, which is responsible for good judgment, reasoning and impulse control.<sup>1</sup>

## BRAIN DAMAGE

The brain goes through dynamic change during adolescence (ages 12-21). Alcohol can seriously damage the long- and short-term growth process.<sup>1</sup>



## ALCOHOL CAN PROGRAM A TEEN'S BRAIN FOR ADDICTION

A teen's brain is much more susceptible to alcohol dependence than an adult's. Alcohol tricks the brain's pleasure-reward system into generating pleasure-reward feelings from a harmful chemical instead of a real experience. Because the teen brain produces an abundance of dopamine, it can rapidly go from liking, to wanting, to craving alcohol.<sup>3</sup>

HEALTHY NON-DRINKER



SOBER WITH ALCOHOL-USE HISTORY

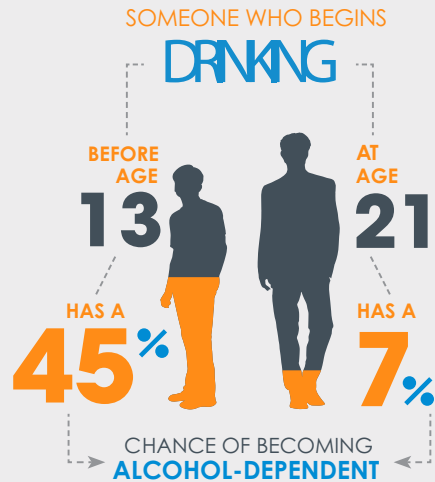


These SPECT images show functional activity levels in the brain of a healthy non-drinker (left) and that of a sober 21-year-old with a four-year history of heavy alcohol use (right). The "holes" indicate areas of reduced brain activity.

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# SOBERING FACTS ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING

**1** Parents must convey clear disapproval of underage drinking, because even a small amount of perceived parental acceptability can lead to substance use.<sup>5</sup>

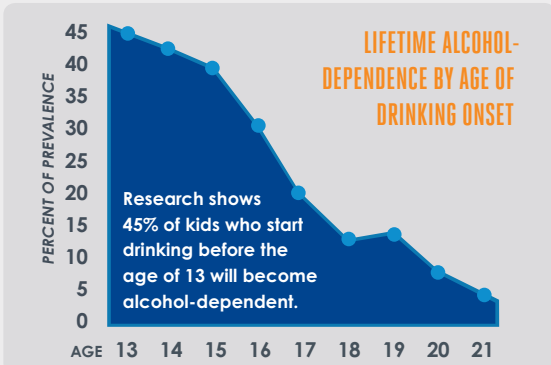


**2** The younger a person starts to drink, the higher the risk of addiction. Those who start before age 13 have a 45% chance of becoming alcohol-dependent, compared to 7% for those who wait until 21.<sup>4</sup>

**3** Binge drinking now begins as early as grade school.<sup>5</sup>

**4** Research shows 67% of teens who drink before age 15 will try other illicit drugs.<sup>6</sup>

**5** It is against the law for a minor to purchase, possess, or consume any alcoholic beverage. It is illegal for anyone to sell, offer to sell, or furnish alcohol to a minor.



## PREVENTING UNDERAGE DRINKING REQUIRES PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT.<sup>7</sup>

Like nearly anything worthwhile, keeping your children alcohol-free takes effort, commitment and consistency. Fortunately, the process can be both fun and rewarding. Develop and use the following skills and you're well on your way.

### 1 Bonding Stay close to your kids



**Bonding is essential to preventing underage drinking. Children are less likely to drink when their parents are involved in their lives, and when children and parents feel close to each other.<sup>8</sup>**

#### SPEND TIME TOGETHER

Try to spend at least 15 minutes a day of one-on-one time.<sup>9</sup> The more time you spend together, the closer your relationship will be.

#### DO FUN ACTIVITIES TOGETHER

Do fun things together on a regular basis. Play catch. Go camping. Do craft projects. Don't skip vacations. Have a weekly "game night." Invite your kids to help plan your weekly activities.

#### EAT DINNER TOGETHER

Research shows teens who regularly eat as a family five to seven times per week are 33% less likely to use alcohol.<sup>10</sup>



#### LISTEN AND BE SUPPORTIVE

Take time daily to talk with your kids about their interests and activities. Ask about their lives, hopes, fears, and concerns. Encourage them to do well in school.

#### CREATE A POSITIVE HOME ENVIRONMENT

Be kind and respectful of each other. Remind your kids often that you love them. Maintain at least a 4:1 ratio of positive comments to negative ones.

(See [www.family.samhsa.gov/talk/encouragement](http://www.family.samhsa.gov/talk/encouragement))

### 2 Boundaries Set clear rules and expectations



**Children respond better when they have clear boundaries and expectations. Never assume your children know what your rules, expectations and attitudes are. Write down your rules and discuss them with your children so they understand the reasons behind them.**

#### TEACH THE RISKS OF UNDERAGE DRINKING

At an early age, begin talking with your children about not drinking alcohol. Explain the real risks of underage drinking. Ask questions. Make sure they understand.

#### DISCUSS WHAT TO DO IF ALCOHOL IS PRESENT

It is essential that children have an alcohol-free social environment to help them remain alcohol-free. Make sure your children know what to do if they are at a party and alcohol is present or if they are offered alcohol. For example: "If there is alcohol at a party, call me, and I'll pick you up." Also brainstorm and practice ways to say "No," in addition to ensuring participation in alcohol-free activities.

#### CONSISTENTLY ENFORCE THE RULES

Give appropriate consequences every time and reward your kids for staying alcohol-free.



#### HELP KIDS CHOOSE FRIENDS WISELY

Studies show significant increased risk for underage drinking is influenced by whether your children's friends drink.<sup>11</sup> Encourage your children to choose friends who support your no-alcohol rules. Discuss your no-alcohol policy with your kids' friends.



### 3 Monitoring Who, what, when & where



**Know where your kids are, who they're with, and what they are doing. Stay involved. Studies show parental involvement drops by half between the 6th and 12th grades.<sup>12</sup> It's important to remain engaged throughout their teen years.**

#### KNOW YOUR CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

Kids need fun. Help provide safe, enjoyable, "no-alcohol" fun for your kids and their friends. When you aren't able to be there, make sure your kids have planned activities and appropriate adult supervision.

#### OBSERVE YOUR CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Watch for signs of excess stress or depression. These can lead to teen drinking. Help them cope in healthy ways: music, exercise, talking with a counselor, friend or doctor, etc.

#### KNOW YOUR CHILDREN'S FRIENDS AND THEIR PARENTS

Get to know their friends and the parents of those friends. Discuss with the parents your desires to keep your kids alcohol-free and enlist their cooperation.

#### ENSURE AN ALCOHOL-FREE ENVIRONMENT

Make sure alcohol isn't available to your kids at home or from friends, siblings, etc. If they go to a friend's house, call to make sure parents will be home and there will be no alcohol.

#### KEEP IN TOUCH

Studies show kids are more at risk for alcohol use between the hours of 3:00 and 6:00 p.m., while many parents are still at work.<sup>13</sup> When you're away, call your kids. Text them. Show up occasionally, unannounced. Have a neighbor drop by. Let your kids know it's because you love and care for them.

**At some level, most kids appreciate parental monitoring. It's very real proof their parents love them enough to care about their well-being.**

