

PROTECTING A CHILD'S HEALTHY, DEVELOPING BRAIN



Your child's brain continues to develop through adolescence.¹ As a result, the harms from alcohol during these pivotal years can alter how the brain develops, affecting areas of the brain related to learning, memory and judgment.² A healthy brain has far-reaching benefits—helping contribute to a child's overall success and satisfaction in life.

TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT ALCOHOL EARLY

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends speaking with your children as early as age 9.³ That's because children develop their perceptions about alcohol between the ages of 9 and 13. While it might seem early, it helps your kids understand the potential harms. It also gives you the chance to make your expectations clear about not drinking underage, increasing the likelihood their brains will remain alcohol-free.

40% OF KIDS WHO DRINK BEFORE AGE 15 WILL BECOME ALCOHOL-DEPENDENT.⁴

67% OF KIDS WHO DRINK BEFORE THE AGE OF 15 WILL ALSO GO ON TO USE ILLEGAL DRUGS.⁵

44% OF KIDS WHO DRINK DID SO AT HOME WITH THEIR PARENTS' PERMISSION.⁶

WHITE MATTER

Transmits signals between cells. Harms from alcohol can affect attention span and ability to comprehend information.¹⁰

THE PREFRONTAL AREA

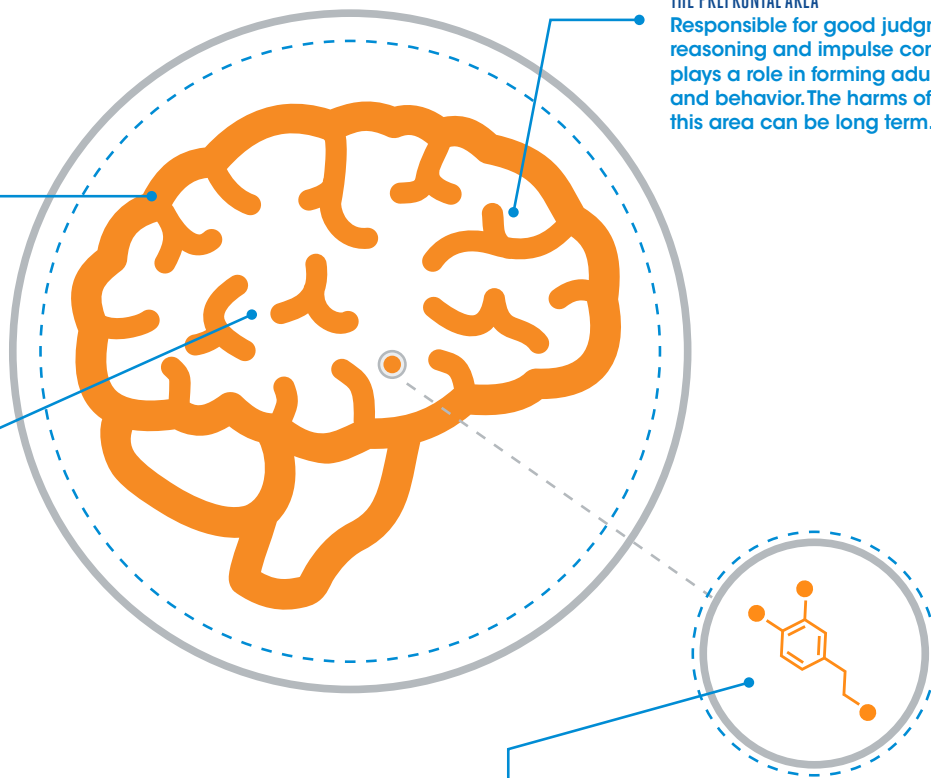
Responsible for good judgment, reasoning and impulse control. Also plays a role in forming adult personality and behavior. The harms of alcohol to this area can be long term.⁷

THE HIPPOCAMPUS

Responsible for memory and learning. Can be 10% smaller among kids who begin drinking early and then drink heavily.⁹

DOPAMINE

Alcohol tricks the brain's pleasure-reward system into generating dopamine (the feel-good chemical), programming an adolescent's brain for addiction.⁸



PARENTS ARE THE #1 REASON KIDS DON'T DRINK



Believe it or not, teens still listen to their parents. In fact, kids usually listen to their parents more than anybody else, including their friends. Utah data shows that when parents are clear about their strong disapproval of underage drinking, 97% of kids choose not to drink.¹¹

SKILLS FOR PREVENTING UNDERAGE DRINKING

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.

DO AN EMOTIONAL CLOSENESS CHECK-UP

Occasionally reviewing the status of your relationship with your child can be helpful. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does your child feel close to you?
- Does your child share their thoughts and feelings with you?
- Does your child enjoy spending time with you?
- If my child had a personal problem, would they feel comfortable asking me for help?

SPEND TIME TOGETHER

Try to spend at least 15 minutes a day of one-on-one time, doing things your child likes to do.

EAT MEALS TOGETHER

Eating a meal with your family provides a great opportunity to strike up a conversation with your children about their day and share their thoughts and concerns.



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

By age 9, begin talking with your children about not drinking alcohol underage.

DISCUSS WHAT TO DO IF OFFERED ALCOHOL

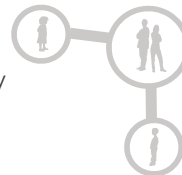
Make sure your children know to call or text you for a ride home if alcohol is offered to them. Keep their social environment alcohol-free.

CONSISTENTLY ENFORCE THE RULES

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

HELP KIDS CHOOSE FRIENDS WISELY

Studies show if your kids' friends drink, the risk for your kids to drink underage is significantly increased.¹²



3 Monitoring

Who, what, when, where & will



Know where your kids are, who they're with, and what they are doing. Stay involved. Studies show parental involvement drops significantly between the 6th and 12th grades.¹³ It's important to remain engaged throughout their adolescent years.

ASK THE 5 Ws

1. Where are you going?
2. What will you be doing?
3. Who will you be with?
4. When will you be home?
5. Will there be alcohol?

ENSURE AN ALCOHOL-FREE ENVIRONMENT

Make sure alcohol isn't available to your kids at home or from friends, siblings, etc.

KNOW YOUR CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

Help provide safe, enjoyable, no-alcohol fun for your kids and their friends.

Parents Empowered is a statewide media and community education campaign focused on parents, because parental disapproval is the number one reason kids choose not to drink. The initiative provides parents with proven skills to protect kids' healthy brains from the harms of alcohol and promote their bright futures. For more information, visit parentsempowered.org.

SOURCES:

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