

## Fact or Myth?

**MYTH:** *If I teach my child responsible drinking in high school, they are less likely to get into trouble in college.*

**FACT:** Research shows that the younger a person starts drinking, the more likely they are to binge drink, experience black outs, and puts them at a greater risk for addiction. People who begin drinking by age 15 are five times more likely to experience addiction than someone who begins at age 20.

**MYTH:** *If an 18 year old is allowed to vote and serve in the military, they should also be allowed to drink.*

**FACT:** Recent brain studies have proven that the brain develops well into a person's mid-twenties. Alcohol has an irreversible negative impact on the teenage brain, especially in the frontal lobe, which controls decision making and critical thinking.

The Bernards Township Municipal Alliance Against Substance Abuse is a community coalition administered by the Bernards Township Health Department. The Municipal Alliance provides consultation, programs, training and resources to members of the Bernards Township community with the goal of preventing and reducing the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. For more information, visit

[www.bernardsalliance.org](http://www.bernardsalliance.org).



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## The Truth About Underage Drinking:



### Empowering Smart Decisions



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## Underage Drinking: An Inevitable Problem?

Underage drinking presents many well known problems; however, what to do about it is not so clear. Some say that drinking in high school is a rite of passage or it teaches their kids to drink responsibly before going away to college.

In actuality, the younger a person starts drinking, the greater the amount of problems they are likely to experience in college and beyond: more frequent episodes of binge drinking, blackouts, unwanted sexual activity, addiction, and more.

You may ask, "But what can we do to help our children make the right decisions?" The answer: plenty. Teens say they rely on the adults in their lives more than anyone else to help them make tough decisions and provide good advice.

According to the 2009 American Drug & Alcohol Survey, taken by Bernards Township students, **65%** of seniors have used alcohol within the last month, compared to the national average of **43%**.



**A Standard Drink**



### How do you reduce the risk?

Parents have an enormous impact on the decisions that their children make. Here are a few things you can do to reduce the risk of early alcohol use:

- **Talk early and often:** Maintaining open lines of communication lets kids know that they have someone to talk to when faced with tough decisions.
- **Get involved** – Talking with kids about their activities opens opportunities to share your interests and values.
- **Be a good role model** – In addition to your words, your actions are powerful indicators to your children of what is appropriate and acceptable. Don't take part in illegal, unhealthy, dangerous practices related to drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
- **Teach kids to choose friends wisely** – Help them to understand what qualities to look for in a friend.
- **Monitor their activities** – This includes knowing where your children are and getting acquainted with their friends and friends' parents. Limit amount of time they spend without an adult present. Unsupervised children have more opportunities to experiment

with risky behaviors

- **Set clear rules** – Having clear and consistent rules to follow protects children's physical and mental well-being, lowering their risk for developing substance abuse problems. Rules and consequences should be specific, consistent, and reasonable, good behavior should be recognized.

### Teenage Binge Drinking

Most adults use alcohol on occasion as a beverage and avoid intoxication. For youth, alcohol is usually consumed with the purpose of getting drunk and that's one reason why it can be so deadly. **1 in 5** teens have reported experiencing blackouts due to heavy drinking. Furthermore, drinking in high school, especially in males, is predictive of binge drinking in college.

Binge drinking can lead to alcohol poisoning, a potentially fatal overdose. The brain is deprived of oxygen, and can shut down organs that are vital to survival. Symptoms include vomiting, unconsciousness, cold, clammy, and pale blue skin, and slow, irregular breathing.



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