



PARENT POST

Talking about the risks of underage drinking

One major contributor to why kids may decide to use alcohol is the normalization - or even glorification - of alcohol in their environment. Middle schoolers are consuming online content and other media more than ever, and this content informs how they think about underage drinking. Music, TV shows, movies, and social media posts all influence a child's perception, often in a negative way. Pop culture tends to portray drinking as glamorous, exciting, and fun while leaving out the negative consequences. It's important to talk to your child about alcohol use, to ensure that they understand the reality of underage drinking. Parents can share about the social, physical, and mental health risks that come with alcohol use.

Social Consequences

Youth alcohol use can negatively impact a teen's social health in many ways. Frequent and heavy alcohol use has been linked to an increased likelihood to get into physical fights and develop antisocial behaviors. Studies have found that, compared to their non-drinking peers, frequent heavy adolescent drinkers are nearly three times more likely to be in a fight and over six times more likely to be injured in a fight. Teen drinking can also strain a teen's relationships with their family and friends, result in legal consequences, and cause an increase risky behaviors. Underage drinking can cause youth to experience difficulties at school, including more absences, lower grades, and getting in trouble due to their behaviors.

Mental Health Impacts

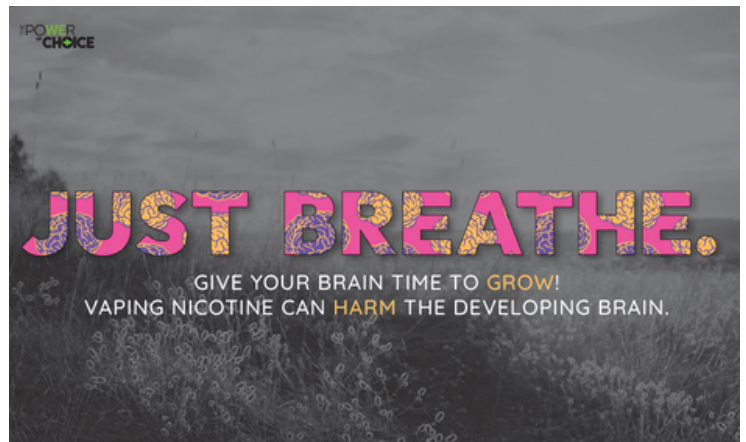
Underage drinking is associated with a wide range of mental health concerns, including an increased risk of depression, anxiety, behavioral issues, low self-esteem, and future alcohol misuse. Alcohol use can also impair a teen's stress response, causing stressful events to be more damaging and lengthening recovery time. Perhaps most notably, teen alcohol consumption can lead to alcohol use disorder (AUD), a medical condition generally characterized by continued alcohol use despite awareness of negative consequences. AUD is a chronic and progressive disorder that can severely impact all facets of a person's life. The more a youth drinks while their brain is developing, the higher their risk of developing AUD. In fact, research shows that adolescents who start drinking before age fifteen are four times more likely to develop AUD than people who only drank after reaching legal age.

Physical Health Risks

Underage alcohol use increases a teen's risk of being injured through alcohol-related falls, burns, drowning, and car accidents. Frequent drinkers are more likely to engage in behaviors that put them at risk of serious harm, including using other substances and driving under the influence. Like with mental and social health, underage drinking can also have long-term, and even life-long, impacts on a child's physical health. These long lasting impacts for children who repeatedly and heavily use alcohol include slowed brain development, heart and liver diseases, brain damage, high blood pressure, and much more. In total, the World Health Organization estimates that alcohol use contributes to over 200 diseases, injuries, and other health conditions.

Prevention at Your Child's School

Check out the latest Power of Choice Middle School vaping campaign poster! Students will see these posted, along with newsletters, throughout their hallways, reminding them that their health matters. Each sign provides facts and information on the potentially harmful effects that vaping can have on their growing bodies.



Additional Resources

- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)
- [Illinois Liquor Control Commission](#)
- [Prevention First](#)
- [Partnership to End Addiction](#)

Connect With Us!

Rebecca Anderson
Power of Choice 6-8th Grade Coordinator
randerson@360youthservices.org



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