A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

This leaflet can help you to help your child make the right choices about alcohol – if and when they decide to drink.

LET'S TALK ABOUT DRINKING

OK.

DRINK AWARE.CO.UK
FROM AN EARLY AGE, CHILDREN BECOME AWARE OF ALCOHOL AND DRINKING. THEY MIGHT SEE ADULTS DRINKING,
ADVERTISEMENTS FOR ALCOHOL AND PEOPLE DRINKING ON TV PROGRAMMES. JUST LIKE YOU DID ONCE, THEY’LL PROBABLY WONDER AT SOME POINT:

- Is drinking good or bad?
- Are there times when it’s not OK to drink alcohol?
- What are the effects – what would it do to me?
- Why do people drink?

Why should I talk to my kids about drinking?

What you say, and what you do, has a lot of influence on your child – probably more than you think. You’re in a good position to help make sure your child gets accurate information and makes responsible choices about drinking when they grow up.

BUT WON’T THEY LEARN ABOUT IT IN SCHOOL?

Ideally, yes. But alcohol is often squeezed out so that teachers can spend more time talking about sex and drugs. By talking about drinking at home, you can help to reinforce what your child learns at school.

How can I get started?

Many parents like to let the subject come up naturally. Television programmes are a good place to start – alcohol often features in programmes like “EastEnders” and “Coronation Street”. Or you might prefer to wait until your child asks you questions about drinking. It doesn’t really matter – whatever feels most comfortable for you.
Should I let them drink?

Some families allow children to drink small quantities of alcohol on special occasions – a sip from a parent’s glass or a tiny amount in their own glass. It’s up to you to decide whether your child is allowed to drink and if so, how much. Remember though, that it’s illegal to give alcohol to a child under 5. And keep it out of bounds unless you offer it and are there to supervise.

TOP TIPS

MAKE SURE THE INFORMATION THEY HAVE IS ACCURATE

If your child is curious about alcohol, talk naturally about it

TELL THEM ABOUT THE NEGATIVE AND THE POSITIVE SIDES OF DRINKING

If you drink moderately yourself, it will help your child develop a responsible attitude to drink too

SHOW YOUR CHILD THAT IT’S POSSIBLE TO ENJOY YOURSELF WITHOUT DRINKING ALCOHOL

Agree rules and stick to them

KNOW WHERE YOUR CHILD OR TEENAGER IS AND WHAT THEY’RE UP TO

Try not to overreact if your child or teenager drinks against your wishes or drinks too much. Stay calm – try not to accuse, lecture or judge. Listen to what they have to say and discuss the situation.
"This year we haven’t really covered alcohol... the kids wanted to look at drugs, bullying and things like that..."

TEACHER

"Drinking is an important part of our culture. And it can be a very positive thing. It’s a very sociable activity. You feel relaxed and can have a good time."

YOUTH WORKER
IF YOUR CHILD IS AGED 8-11

...they are likely to have their first taste of alcohol at some point. You might want to let them have a sip so that they’re not tempted to try it behind your back. You could also explain the difference between responsible drinking and drinking too much. Tell them that drinking too much is harmful.

IF YOUR CHILD IS AGED 12-14

...they may start drinking outdoors or at friends’ houses. You might want to tell them how alcohol affects the body and what can happen when people drink too much. Make sure they also know what the law says about young people. All this information can be found in this leaflet. If you find that they have been drinking outside the house without your permission, stay calm. Listen. Try to understand what happened. Talk about how they can say no.

IF YOUR CHILD IS AGED 15-17

...they probably spend a lot of time with friends outside the home. At this age, many teenagers are drinking regularly and even get drunk sometimes. Make sure you know where they are, who they’re with and what they’re doing. Show them that you’re still in charge but make sure they know that it’s because you care.

For more information on responsible drinking and units click on www.drinkaware.co.uk
"We all remember being a teenager and getting drunk...it's part of growing up."

FATHER OF 12 YEAR OLD BOY

"You see it on the soaps all the time about getting drunk, having one night stands, getting pregnant and having an abortion. That tells you what alcohol can do..."

13 YEAR OLD GIRL

"I don't want to make a big deal out of it...we have enough to worry about."

MOTHER OF 12 YR OLD GIRL
HOW MUCH IS IN A DRINK?

The strength of an alcoholic drink is shown on the label by a number followed by % vol – this is known as the alcohol by volume (abv). The higher the number, the stronger the drink. Alcohol can also be measured in units.

1 pint of ordinary strength beer, lager or cider = 2-3 units
1 single pub measure of spirits = 1 unit
1 "alcopop" or "Ready to Drink" = 1.5 units
1 large glass of wine = 2-3 units
1 can of superstrength lager = 4 units
1 can of standard lager = 2 units
1 bottle of premium lager = 2 units

visit: www.drinkaware.co.uk
How much is too much?

Adults are advised by the Department of Health to drink no more than

2 to 3 units per day for women
3 to 4 units per day for men

- These are guidelines only and are for adults. Under 18s should drink well below these amounts, if at all - there is no known "safe" amount for children.

- Remember that it's not OK to save up units for the weekend. 'Binge drinking' or drinking a lot in one go is very risky.

- Don't drink and drive. And don't drink before doing sports or operating machinery.

- Current Government advice is that pregnant women should drink no more than 1 to 2 units and only once or twice a week, if at all.

- Mixing alcohol and drugs - whether illegal drugs or medicines - can be dangerous and can even kill.

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What are the effects of drinking too much?

Many people enjoy drinking. If they drink moderately and follow the advice above, they're unlikely to come to any harm.

But drinking too much has serious downsides. Some of the immediate (short term) effects of drinking too much might be:

- Feeling sick and/or vomiting
- Headaches or "hangovers"
- Accidents and/or injuries
- Arguments/fights
- Alcohol poisoning leading in some cases to coma or even death
- Sexual risks which can lead to unwanted or unplanned pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections e.g. HIV

**DRINKING TOO MUCH OVER A LONGER PERIOD OF TIME CAN LEAD TO:**

- Alcohol dependence ("alcoholism")
- Certain types of cancer
- Brain damage
- Sexual problems
- Stomach disorders (ulcers)
- Mood swings and depression

*And don't forget that drinking during pregnancy – especially heavy drinking – can damage the unborn child.*

**IT'S THE LAW!**

- Children under 5 are not allowed to drink alcohol.
- Police can confiscate alcohol from under 18s if they're drinking in a public place e.g. in parks or on the street.
- Under 18s are not allowed to buy alcohol from off licences, supermarkets and pubs/clubs.
IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR OWN OR SOMEONE ELSE'S DRINKING, THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP. YOU MIGHT LIKE TO TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR WHO CAN REFER YOU TO LOCAL ALCOHOL COUNSELLING ORGANISATIONS. OR LOOK IN YOUR LOCAL TELEPHONE DIRECTORY (USUALLY UNDER 'ALCOHOL'). THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS CAN GIVE YOU INFORMATION AND HELP.

USEFUL CONTACTS

AL-ANON
A community resource.
Confidential helpline:
020 7403 0888

ALCOHOL FOCUS SCOTLAND
2nd floor, 166 Buchanan Street,
Glasgow G1 2 LW
Tel: 0141 572 6700
www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
(HEAD OFFICE)
P O Box 1, Stonebow House,
Stonebow,
York YO1 7NJ
Tel: 01904 644 026
National Helpline:
0845 7697555
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

ALCOHOL CONCERN
Waterbridge House, 32-36
Loman Street,
London SE1 0EE
Tel: 020 7928 7577
www.alcoholconcern.org.uk

DRINKLINE
Open daily Monday to Friday
9am-11pm, Saturday and
Sunday 6pm-11pm. Calls are
free and confidential.
Tel: 0800 917 8282

NHS HEALTH SCOTLAND
Woodburn House, Canaan
Lane, Edinburgh EH10 4SG
Tel: 0131 536 5500
www.healthscotland.com

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(HER LECHYD CYMRU)
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London NW5 1TL
Tel: 020 7284 5500 (admin)
Tel: 0808 800 2222
(free helpline number)
email: parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk
www.parentlineplus.org.uk