

Facts About Underage Drinking

(Excerpts from "*Start Talking Before They Start Drinking: A Family Guide*", Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

The negative consequences of underage drinking are more widespread and serious than previously known. A growing body of research shows that alcohol can change the way the brain works and the way it's wired, and may have consequences reaching far beyond adolescence. Many more dangers of underage drinking are immediate, including alcohol poisoning, sexual and physical assault, and motor vehicle crashes.

You can help protect your children from the risks associated with drinking by maintaining open communication and expressing a clear, consistent message that underage alcohol use is unacceptable. Building a close relationship with your children will increase the likelihood they come to you for help in making decisions that impact their health and well-being.

In order to make good decisions, your children need to be well-informed. Don't wait until a problem arises to talk to them about drinking alcohol. Be sure to tell your child:

1. A **single drink** of alcohol can affect you.
2. Once alcohol enters **the brain**, it changes the way a person behaves. Alcohol can make people do things they do not want to do.
3. As a person drinks more alcohol, the ability to make decisions is affected. The drinker also may lose balance and be unable to see or speak clearly. The more alcohol a person drinks, the worse the **effects** can be.
4. Some people get addicted to alcohol. They drink more and more as they get used to the alcohol, but they **can stop and recover**.
5. **Alcohol can kill**. When a person drinks too much alcohol in a very short period, alcohol poisoning can occur. Breathing gets difficult, vomiting can occur, a person can pass out or even die.

If you would like a copy of the pamphlet "*Start Talking Before They Start Drinking*", contact the Metuchen Public Schools Student Assistance Coordinator, Mrs. Judi Cheung, 732-321-8720.

ALL CALLS ARE STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.