

Common Myths About Underage Drinking



Your teen might think they've got alcohol all figured out but let's bust some misconceptions about underage drinking that may come up.

MYTH 1	It's just for fun – what's the harm?	FACT 1	Not only is it illegal, underage drinking can affect brain development, increase the risk of addiction, lead to long-term health risks, and result in poor decision-making. It also can result in fines, consequences at school or sports, or even criminal charges. NIAAA, 2024
MYTH 2	Everyone drinks in high school – it's normal!	FACT 2	Half of 12th graders report they have never consumed alcohol, and 78% of 12th graders report they have not consumed alcohol in the past 30 days. Monitoring the Future, 2024
MYTH 3	Getting drunk is a rite of passage.	FACT 3	Perception is not reality! Not only are fewer teenagers drinking, but today's teenagers are not drinking at the same levels as previous generations, and that includes binge drinking. Monitoring the Future, 2024
MYTH 4	I'll be ok if I just drink beer and wine and stay away from liquor.	FACT 4	There is no amount of alcohol that is safe to drink underage. And, when it comes to impairment, it is the amount of alcohol, not the type of alcohol that matters. CDC, 2024



For more information on how to talk to your teenager about the dangers of underage drinking, visit

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MYTH 5	Drinking coffee or taking a cold shower can sober you up.	FACT 5	The only way to sober up is TIME. The body needs time to process alcohol, about one hour per drink, which is the only way to lower one's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) level. Cederbaum, 2013
MYTH 6	Alcohol affects everyone the same.	FACT 6	Younger people, females, and smaller individuals are more likely to be impacted by alcohol faster than their counterparts. How someone is feeling or if they are taking medication can also impact how alcohol affects a person. Cleveland Clinic, 2022
MYTH 7	I'm okay to drive if I've only had a drink or two.	FACT 7	Besides being illegal to drink alcohol under the age of 21, it is illegal for teens to drive with alcohol in their systems. Teenagers are already inexperienced drivers, and drinking alcohol can lower inhibitions, decrease decision-making ability, and slow reaction times possibly leading to dangerous and deadly crashes. CDC, 2025
MYTH 8	Alcohol helps me relax.	FACT 8	While alcohol can provide short-term feelings of relaxation, once the effects of alcohol wear off, anxiety often increases again leading people to consume larger quantities to feel the desired effect, which can lead to harmful drinking. NIAAA, 2025
MYTH 9	I'm young – I can't become addicted to alcohol.	FACT 9	Young people are especially vulnerable to alcohol use disorder. Around 775,000 young people under 18 meet the criteria each year. Starting to drink early in life increases the risk of developing long-term dependency. NSDUH, 2024



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