

Our Futures – Year 8

Alcohol: Lesson 2

How much do teenagers drink?

Many adolescents falsely believe that the majority of their peers are drinking alcohol in excessive quantities. This can result in these adolescents consuming excessive alcohol themselves in an attempt to conform with their peers. The truth is that very few adolescents drink alcohol. Research has shown that if young people have accurate information regarding their peer's consumption of alcohol, they themselves are less likely to consume alcohol.

The 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that although many 12-15 year olds have tried alcohol, only 11% have ever had a full serve of alcohol. The results of this survey revealed that very few 12-15 year olds drink to excess, with only 0.7% reporting drinking above a level that increases the risk of alcohol-related injury on a single occasion.

Reassuringly, the 2019 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, which looked at older adolescents (14-17 years), found that there has been a considerable increase in the number of young people abstaining from drinking alcohol in recent years. Among 14-17 year olds, 73% abstained from alcohol, which is more than a 20% increase compared to 2010 figures.

The 2017 Australian Secondary School Students Alcohol and Drug Survey found that, amongst the small number of 12-15 year olds who had drunk alcohol in the past week, supply of alcohol was most commonly from parents, followed by a friend over the age of 18 or by taking alcohol from home. It is important to remember that, in all Australian states and territories, it is illegal to supply someone under the age of 18 with alcohol unless you are a parent/guardian or a responsible adult authorised by a parent/guardian.

Useful Resources

This reference list is provided as a good source of information for parents who may be interested in reading further.

For information and statistics on alcohol use among Australian students:

Australian Government Department of Health (2018). Australian secondary school student' use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs in 2017

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/secondary-school-students-use-of-tobacco-alcohol-and-other-drugs-in-2017>

For information and statistics on alcohol use in Australia:

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2020). 2019 National Drug Strategy Household Survey report.

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/illicit-use-of-drugs/national-drug-strategy-household-survey-2019/contents/table-of-contents>

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2017). 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey: detailed findings.

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/illicit-use-of-drugs/2016-ndshs-detailed/contents/table-of-contents>

For general information about alcohol tailored to Parents/Teachers:

Positive Choices. Alcohol: Detailed Resource (for Parents/Teachers).

<https://positivechoices.org.au/documents/ArhqqWfklz/alcohol-detailed-resource-for-parentsteachers/>

For information about drugs and alcohol, how teachers can help their students avoid alcohol-related harms and school-based alcohol education programs:

Positive Choices. Drug and Alcohol Education: Teacher Booklet.

<https://positivechoices.org.au/teachers/drug-education-teacher-booklet>

For general information about alcohol:

Alcohol and Drug Foundation. Alcohol Fact Sheet.

<https://cdn.adf.org.au/media/documents/Alcohol-Fact-Sheet-FINAL.pdf>

For information about the impact of alcohol use in adolescence on the brain and behaviour:

Lees, B., Meredith, L. R., Kirkland, A. E., Bryant, B. E., & Squeglia, L. M. (2020). Effect of alcohol use on the adolescent brain and behavior. *Pharmacology Biochemistry and Behavior*, 192, 172906.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7183385/pdf/nihms-1578284.pdf>

For information about the role of family, friends, and peers in adolescents' alcohol consumption:

Kaynak, Ö., Winters, K. C., Cacciola, J., Kirby, K. C., & Arria, A. M. (2014). Providing Alcohol for Underage Youth: What Messages Should We Be Sending Parents? *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 75(4), 590-605.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4108600/pdf/jsad590.pdf>