

# Our Futures – Year 8

## Alcohol: Lesson 3

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### Risks associated with heavy alcohol consumption

Listing the risks associated with drinking **too much** alcohol under the headings “long-term” and “short-term” risks is simple and for this reason will be adopted in this summary. However, it is important to reinforce to your child that this is too simplistic and for most consequences there is a domino effect. Consider the following scenario:

‘A 45-year-old man is driving home under the influence of alcohol. He is pulled over by the police and charged. As a result, he loses his licence. This man works as a truck driver and as a consequence of losing his licence, he also loses his job. This results in his family having to move to a cheaper rental property. His wife can no longer cope with his constant heavy drinking and the impact this has on their lives. She decides to leave him. The children go and live with their mother. The family are forced to live in greater poverty and have to cope with a split family.’

From this example, it is clear that for any discrete short- or long-term consequence listed on the following pages, that the greater picture needs to be considered.

### Short-term consequences

#### Physical Health

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Coma
- Death
- Poor coordination
- Hangover
- Slurred speech
- Loss of consciousness
- Disorientation
- Poor balance

- Slowed reflexes
- Abnormal heart rhythm
- Dieting can lead to a disproportionate loss of body fluid. This means that the effects of alcohol are exacerbated when consumed in conjunction with dieting, due to the increased concentration of alcohol resulting from reduced body fluid.
- Drink driving is a factor in approximately 1 in 5 driving accidents where someone loses their life, and one third of all drivers involved in fatal accidents are aged between 17-24 years.

### **Mental Health**

- Verbal aggression
- Poor short-term memory retrieval
- Poor long-term memory retrieval
- Decreased ability to pay attention to more than one thing at a time
- Decreased ability to form memories – leading to experience of “blackouts” in memory
- Poorer concentration
- Physical aggression
- Decreased inhibitions
- Poor decision-making
- Low mood

### **Social Interactions**

- Embarrassing social situations e.g., vomiting in public, decreased inhibitions
- Fights (verbal and physical) from having a reduced capacity to think clearly and resolve potential conflict
- Broken friendships
- A person who drinks too much alcohol is more likely to be verbally abused and be the victim of crime
- Unwanted sexual situations and unprotected sex which can lead to pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STI's)

### **Younger People are at Increased Risk**

Younger people are more likely than older people to participate in physical activities which require good motor skills e.g., swimming and rock climbing. If these skill-dependent activities are combined with alcohol, the results can be tragic as alcohol inhibits motor skills.

### **Long-term consequences**

#### **Physical Health**

- Increased risk of stroke
- Cancers of the head, neck and digestive tract

- Liver-related illness and death
- Increased blood pressure and risk of heart disease

### **Mental Health**

- Alcohol abuse and dependence
- Impairment in memory, reasoning and thinking
- Increased risk of mood and anxiety disorders

### **Occupational / Work**

- Poor school or work performance
- Loss of job or future career opportunity
- Absenteeism

### **Family & Social**

- Relationship breakdown
- Exacerbates potential for domestic violence

### **Economic Costs To Society**

- Lost work productivity
- Health care costs (e.g., accidents, insurance claims, alcohol treatment)

### **Useful Resources**

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

#### **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 general information about alcohol and young people:**

Alcohol and Drug Foundation (2018). Alcohol and young people.

[https://cdn.adf.org.au/media/documents/ADF\\_AOD\\_YoungPeople.pdf](https://cdn.adf.org.au/media/documents/ADF_AOD_YoungPeople.pdf)

#### **For information about the Australian drinking guidelines:**

National Health and Medical Research Council. (2020). Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol. Commonwealth of Australia.

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/file/15923/download?token=t0Hrxdvq>

#### **For information about risky driving among Australian adolescents:**

Australian Institute of Family Studies (2019). Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) Annual Statistical Report 2018.

[https://growingupinaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/lisac-asr-2018-chap6-risky\\_driving.pdf](https://growingupinaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/lisac-asr-2018-chap6-risky_driving.pdf)

**For information and statistics on alcohol use among Australian students:**

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

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/australian-secondary-school-students-alcohol-and-drug-assad-survey-2017>

**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 alcohol-related harms:**

Australian Medical Association (2009). Alcohol Use and Harms in Australia - Information Paper.

<https://ama.com.au/articles/alcohol-use-and-harms-australia-2009-information-paper>

Sanci, L., Webb, M., & Hocking, J. (2018). Risk-taking behaviour in adolescents. *Australian Journal of General Practice*, 47(12), 829-834.

<https://www1.racgp.org.au/getattachment/c32695ae-4ab9-4596-90e8-21178bf35c06/Risk-taking-behaviour-in-adolescents.aspx>

**For information about drink driving facts and statistics:**

The Defenders. Drink Driving Facts and Statistics.

<https://www.thedefenders.com.au/drink-driving-statistics/>