

WHY TEENS SHOULDN'T DRINK ALCOHOL

ALCOHOL USE NEGATIVELY IMPACTS BRAIN DEVELOPMENT OF THOSE UNDER AGE 21 AND MAKES THEM MORE PRONE TO OTHER NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES.

WHY SHOULD PARENTS BE CONCERNED?

- Alcohol is the most commonly misused substance among youth and young adults.
- Early initiation of use is more likely to lead to dependency or misuse of alcohol later in life.
- Underage drinking leads to problems in school, physical and sexual assaults, unwanted pregnancies, suicides, vehicle crashes, and abuse of other drugs.
- People who drank before age 15 were four times more likely to become dependent or misuse alcohol later in life.
- Underage drinking causes significant, life-long changes to the structure and function of the brain.

WHY WAIT UNTIL 21?

Delaying the initiation of drinking alcohol until the age of 21 greatly minimizes the negative and long-term impact of alcohol on the brain.



PARENTS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Most Mercer Island parents disapprove of high school students drinking alcohol.

- Parents and those in a parenting role are the most important influences in their teen's life! You impact your teen's decision not to drink alcohol.
- Youth who feel closely connected to their parents are less likely to use alcohol.
- Talk and listen. Ask, "Why do you think it is important not to drink until you are over 21?"
- Change the discussion with your teen from "right and wrong" to "not now."
- Have clear rules. "I want us to be really clear about what the rules are for going to this party."
- If you drink in front of your child, do so in moderation, modeling positive behaviors.
- Monitor their activities so that you always know where they are.
- Clarify misperceptions. Teens often overestimate how often their peers are drinking, and this leads them to believe it is not such a big deal. "It sounds like you think most teens drink regularly. In fact, most Mercer Island teens don't drink regularly. Let's talk more about that."



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