Alcohol & your kids.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Updated October 2018

health promotion agency
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YOU HAVE INFLUENCE
You have influence

Many of us are concerned that at some stage we, and our teens, will come face to face with the issue of alcohol and teenage drinking.

It may be your teenager wants their first taste of alcohol or is planning a party and wants alcohol supplied or has arrived home sick and drunk after a party.

Chances are high that your teenager will encounter alcohol – either through their own drinking or the drinking of someone else.

Helping them keep safe is your job – part of being a parent. Your advice and support is critical even though it may not always be welcomed.

As a parent or caregiver, there are things you can do to help reduce the impact of alcohol on your teenage children. These things may not be easy for everyone but they are proven to make the most difference in young people’s drinking.

Some tips to make a difference in young people’s drinking:

1. **Delay your teenager’s introduction to alcohol as long as possible.**
2. **Be a good role model around your kids – either don’t drink alcohol, or drink only small amounts.**
3. **Make sure you, or someone you know and trust, are watching your teenagers if they consume alcohol.**
4. **If you do supply alcohol, give only small amounts.**
5. **Have a good relationship with your teen, and keep communication open.**
What can I do?

A few tips to get started
Be informed

Alcohol is such an important issue for young people because:

- Brains that are developing are more susceptible to being damaged by alcohol.
- Teens have less physical tolerance to the effects of alcohol.
- Young people experience disproportionate harm related to their drinking or the drinking of someone else including:
  - physical injury
  - violence and sexual assaults
  - suicide and self-injury
dropping out of school
  - unemployment
  - job loss
  - social isolation
  - health problems.
- Even small amounts of alcohol can harm a young person.

Find out more at alcohol.org.nz
Delay your teen’s drinking for as long as possible

Although you may feel that introducing alcohol to your teenagers is a way of teaching them to be responsible, research shows that the younger your kids or teens start drinking, the more likely it is that they will go on to drink harmfully in their late teens and adult life. Delaying starting drinking can help them avoid a range of harms.

Advice for parents of children and young people under 18 years.

Not drinking alcohol is the safest option for children and young people under 18 years.

› Those under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking alcohol and not drinking in this age group is especially important.

› For young people aged 15 to 17 years, the safest option is to delay drinking for as long as possible.

If 15 to 17 year olds do drink alcohol, they should be supervised, drink infrequently and at levels usually below and never exceeding the adult daily limits.

If giving alcohol to teenagers supply low amounts

Teenagers and young adults have less tolerance to alcohol than adults and suffer disproportionate harm from alcohol use. If you decide to supply your teen with alcohol, never exceed the recommended daily amounts for adults.
What is a standard drink?

A ‘standard drink’ contains 10 grams of pure alcohol. Knowing how many standard drinks you’re consuming is the key to understanding how much alcohol you’re drinking, and to avoiding alcohol-related harm.

Read the label

Under New Zealand law, all alcoholic drinks containers must state the number of standard drinks they include. Check the label to see how many standard drinks are inside.

Know your numbers

If a bottle of wine states it contains eight standard drinks and you empty the bottle into four glasses, then each glass you’ve poured will equal two standard drinks.

A guide to standard drinks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beverage Type</th>
<th>Number of Standard Drinks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>330ml Can of Beer @ 4% ALC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100ml Glass of Table Wine @ 12.5% ALC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>335ml Bottle of RTD* Spirits @ 8% ALC</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750ml Bottle of Wine @ 13% ALC</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000ml Bottle of Spirits @ 47% ALC</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Litre Cask of Wine @ 12.5% ALC</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*RTD (READY TO DRINK)
Parties and supervision

Consider having an alcohol-free party if children and teens will be there. If you are having a party with teenagers and alcohol is being served, you or a trusted adult need to actively supervise the party. Your involvement needs to be visible. You may ask that all guests come through the front door first so you know who is there.

Even if you don’t stay in the same room all the time, young people will be safer if adults are moving through the party regularly. Serving food achieves this effortlessly.

If your teen is going to a party where alcohol is present, the adult hosts must have your express consent to supply alcohol to your teenager. This is the law. When contacting the host, it is also the perfect time to ask about time and place, supervision, alcohol and transport arrangements, and staying over. You may get a hard time from your teenager but persist. Do it openly. Tell them it’s not about lack of trust, but it is simply the law and you are looking out for their safety.

Role model

As parents or caregivers, you are probably the most important role model in your children’s lives.

From the start, the attitude you model towards alcohol and the way you drink influences whether, or how, your child will drink in the future.

If you drink, model low-risk drinking. Establish and follow your personal rules for drinking responsibly, and be prepared to explain these rules to your teenager.

When you don’t ‘walk the talk’, this adds to the conflicting messages young people receive around alcohol.

If you have young adults (18+) living at home, encourage them to be good role models for their younger family members.

Serving food and water throughout the party allows you to monitor the state of the party and guests.
Tips for modelling low-risk drinking

**DO**

- Make a point of sometimes refusing alcohol when your children are present.
- Model responsible drinking around your children from when they are very young.
- Make sure you provide food and non-alcoholic beverages when offering alcohol to guests.
- Model healthy ways of coping with stress without alcohol like exercise, listening to music, or talking things over.

**DON'T**

- Drink and drive.
- Let other adults drive after attending a function at your place.
- Portray alcohol as a good way to deal with stress, e.g. ‘I’ve had a bad day, I need a drink’.
- Convey the idea alcohol is fun or glamorous through stories about your own or others’ drinking.

If you’re looking for help with your drinking, free and confidential advice is available on the Alcohol Drug Helpline: 0800 787 797 or free text 8681
WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE A TEENAGER’S DECISION TO DRINK ALCOHOL?
Factors that influence teenage drinking

- New Zealand’s drinking culture
- Early introduction to alcohol
- Exposure to adult binge drinking or alcohol dependence
- Access to cheap alcohol
- Access to alcohol from parents and others
- Parental relationships and attitude to alcohol
- Alcohol marketing
- Truancy and poor educational achievement / school relationships
- Having money to spend
- Long periods of unsupervised time
- Conflict or bullying
- Friends who drink heavily
- Parental relationships and attitude to alcohol
YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR KIDS
Having a close and supportive relationship with your teenager is a hugely protective influence. Teens are less likely to misuse alcohol if parents are involved in their life in positive ways. A good relationship with your teenager will influence how effective your efforts are in protecting them from alcohol misuse, and increase the likelihood that they will seek help from you if they are faced with an issue regarding alcohol.

**DISCUSS YOUR EXPECTATIONS AROUND THEIR ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION**

- Spell them out and discuss why they’re important.
- Be reasonable. Being either too strict or too easy-going doesn’t work.
- Decide together what should happen when rules are broken, such as a grounding, loss of privileges, extra chores.
- Follow through and apply the consequences. Both parents need to agree on and stick to the same rules — particularly if they’re not living together. If your partner or ex won’t support you, get other family members or friends to help.

**WAYS TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR TEENAGER**

- Set a good example.
- Let them know they’ve ‘got what it takes’.
- Regularly demonstrate you care about them.
- Be consistent and create open communication between you and your teen.
- Follow through on promises and enforce rules to build trust.
- Be involved in their life.
- Help them feel good about themselves.
- Help them deal with problems and stress.

*Build and maintain a good relationship with your teen. Keep talking to each other.*
What does the law say?
The Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 controls the sale and supply of alcohol in New Zealand.

**Selling alcohol**
It is illegal to sell alcohol to anyone under 18 years of age.

**Supplying alcohol**
Someone under the age of 18 cannot be supplied with alcohol unless:

- the person supplying the alcohol is their parent or legal guardian AND the alcohol is supplied in a responsible manner, OR
- the person supplying alcohol has the express consent of the teenager’s parent or legal guardian AND the alcohol is supplied in a responsible manner.

*You could be fined up to $2,000 if you don’t follow this law.

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**Who is a guardian?**
A legal guardian is not another family member like an aunt, uncle, older brother or sister, older boyfriend or girlfriend, sports coach or anyone else acting temporarily in the place of a parent.

A person is only considered a teenager’s legal guardian if he or she is recognised as a guardian under the Care of Children Act 2004.

**What does express consent mean?**
If you’re supplying alcohol to an under 18 year old who is not your teen, you need to ensure you have express consent from their parent or legal guardian before giving them alcohol.

Express consent may include a personal conversation, an email or text message that you have good reason to believe is genuine.

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**Drinking and driving**
There is a zero alcohol limit for anyone aged under 20. Anyone under 20 could be charged with drink driving if they consume any alcohol and then drive.
Handling things that go wrong
Some teenagers will experiment with alcohol and may push the boundaries. They may feel peer pressure to drink too much too fast, with harmful consequences.

For others, there may be underlying reasons for drinking, such as depression and anxiety. Have a look at depression.org.nz for information on how to help someone with depression or anxiety.

**Going to parties they’re not allowed to**

Choose a good moment for both of you and tell them how you feel about what they’ve done, including your worries for their safety. Give them a chance to explain. Go back over the rules you agreed to and take action – such as a grounding which includes the following weekend.

**Taking alcohol from you**

Handle it just like any stealing within your family. Discuss what has happened. Follow through by taking suitable action like making your teenager pay for the alcohol taken.

**Getting violent when drunk**

You don't need to put up with violence from anyone, even family members. If you can’t control the situation, call someone who can come quickly, like a friend or the police.

**Vomiting continuously**

Don’t leave your teenager alone. Lay them on their side in the recovery position. Monitor their breathing and heart rate and make sure their mouth is empty. Keep them warm. If there is no improvement, dial 111 for an ambulance.

**Drunk and unconscious**

*Call 111 for an ambulance.*
IF YOU BELIEVE YOUR TEEN IS ABUSING ALCOHOL

There are a range of signs and behaviours which may indicate a teenager is drinking excessively, including:

- Repeated health complaints like vomiting.
- Changes in sleeping patterns.
- Mood changes, especially irritability.
- Starting arguments, withdrawing from the family or breaking family rules.
- Failing exams, missing assignments, frequent school absences or discipline problems at school.
- Changes in social activities and social groups or friends.
- Coming home drunk.
- Smell of alcohol on their clothes, breath, skin, etc.
- Missing sport, school, family events, etc.
- Changes in behaviour – not being where they say they are going to be, etc.

NOTE

Some of these signs can also result from other issues. If you believe your teenager is abusing alcohol, consider discussing your concerns with your GP to rule out other potential causes.

If you feel like things have moved past this point and you need extra help, the Alcohol Drug Helpline will be of assistance – **0800 787 797** or free txt: **8681**

Find out more at [alcohol.org.nz](http://alcohol.org.nz)
Where you can go for help

NZ’s official alcohol website
alcohol.org.nz
Get practical advice about alcohol and test your drinking.

Alcohol Drug Helpline
0800 787 797 or free text 8681
alcoholdrughelp.org.nz
Free advice and details of support services in your area.

National Depression Initiative website
depression.org.nz
Learn about supporting someone with depression or anxiety.

Common Ground
commonground.org.nz
Support for parents and whānau of young people.

KidsHealth
kidshealth.org.nz
Great information on kids of all ages, including a number of alcohol-specific resources.

Parent Help
0800 568 856, parenthelp.org.nz
Online advice and tools plus a free helpline for all parents.

The Parenting Place
theparentingplace.com
Includes a great article on how to talk to your teen about alcohol and drugs.

Your teen may also want to check out these

The Lowdown
0800 111 757
or free text 5626
thelowdown.co.nz
Straight up answers for when life sucks.

Sparx
sparx.org.nz
An online e-therapy tool for young people with depression and anxiety.

Youthline
0800 376 633
or free text 234
youthline.co.nz
Advice hub plus free counselling services for young people, parents and whānau.
For help, contact the Alcohol Drug Helpline on

0800 787 797
Free confidential information, insight and support for you and your family.

Māori line
0800 787 798
Free confidential information, insight and support for you and your whānau.
Whaka-tu-tangata
stand tall – It’s your call

Pasifika line
0800 787 799
Free confidential information, insight and support for you and your family.
It’s your call

For up-to-date statistics and information check out:

alcohol.org.nz