

UNDERAGE DRINKING PREVENTION NATIONAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNDERAGE DRINKING

Over the last several decades, scientific understanding and knowledge of the dangers of underage drinking have increased substantially. Underage drinking is associated with various negative consequences for children and can affect and endanger the lives of those around them.¹

Children who drink alcohol are more likely to:

Use drugs

Frequent binge drinkers (nearly 1 million high school students nationwide) are more likely to engage in risky behaviors, including using other drugs such as marijuana and cocaine.²

Get bad grades

Children who use alcohol have higher rates of academic problems and poor school performance compared with nondrinkers.³

Suffer injury or death

In 2009, an estimated 1,844 homicides; 949,400 nonfatal violent crimes such as rape, robbery, and assault; and 1,811,300 property crimes, including burglary, larceny, and car theft were attributed to underage drinking.⁴

Engage in risky sexual activity

Young people who use alcohol are more likely to be sexually active at earlier ages, to have sexual intercourse more often, and to have unprotected sex.^{5, 6}

Make bad decisions

Drinking lowers inhibitions and increases the chances that children will engage in risky behavior or do something that they will regret when they are sober.^{7, 8}

Have health problems

Young people who drink are more likely to have health issues such as depression and anxiety disorders.⁹

References

- 1 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking: A Guide to Action for Educators*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, 2007..
- 2 Grunbaum, J.A., Kann, L., Kinchen, S., Ross, J., Hawkins, J., Lowry, R., et al. (2004, May 21). Youth risk behavior surveillance—United States, 2003. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report Surveillance Summaries*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. From <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5302a1.htm> (accessed May 3, 2012).
- 3, 9 Bonnie, R.J., and O'Connell, M.E. (Ed.). (2004). *Reducing underage drinking: A collective responsibility*. National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. From <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2003/Reducing-Underage-Drinking-A-Collective-Responsibility.aspx> (accessed May 3, 2012).
- 4 Underage Drinking Enforcement Training Center. (2011, September). *Underage drinking costs*. From <http://www.udetc.org/UnderageDrinkingCosts.asp> (accessed May 10, 2012).
- 5 Fergusson, D.M., and Lynskey, M.T. (1996). Alcohol misuse and adolescent sexual behaviors and risk taking. *Pediatrics*, 98(1), 91–96.
- 6 Tapert, S.F., Aarons, G.A., Sedlar, G.R., and Brown, S.A. (2001). Adolescent substance use and sexual risk-taking behavior. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 28(3), 181–189.
- 7 Goldberg, J.H., Halpern-Felsher, B.L., and Millstein, S.G. (2002). Beyond invulnerability: The importance of benefits in adolescents' decision to drink alcohol. *Health Psychology*, 21(5), 477–484.
- 8 Halpern-Felsher, B.L., and Cauffman, E. (2001). Costs and benefits of a decision: Decision-making competence in adolescents and adults. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 22(3), 257–273.