

# Keeping it Current

## *Raising Healthy Teens*



## Alcohol

Underage drinking is a serious public health problem in the United States. Alcohol is the most widely used substance among America's youth and can cause them enormous health and safety risks.



## Did You Know?

- Chances of developing a substance use disorder:
  - **41%** for Kids who begin drinking before age 15
  - **10%** for those who wait until age 21

## The Facts

- Young people are particularly vulnerable to harm from alcohol because their brains and bodies are still developing.
- Alcohol is a depressant that slows down the brain and makes it harder to make good decisions, concentrate, and control impulses
- Alcohol affects memory, learning, and emotional regulation. Teens are more likely to have blackouts, not remembering what happened while drinking.
- Movement, balance, and coordination are impacted as well, that is why accidents and injuries are common among those who drink.
- Alcohol use, especially at a young age, increases the risk of experiencing mental health issues, including depression and anxiety.
- Young people who start drinking alcohol at an early age are more likely to have problems with alcohol later in life, such as binge drinking and becoming dependent on alcohol.

# The Risks

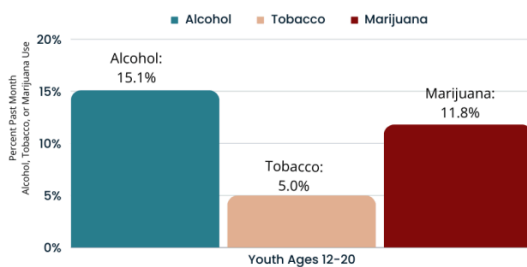
Young people are still developing skills to make good decisions and their brains do not access risks the way adults do. Adding alcohol to the mix could lead to more harm including

- Vomiting, alcohol poisoning, and blackouts
- Injury, such as assaults, falls, or car accidents
- Impairs judgment. Drinking can lead to poor decisions about taking risks, including unsafe sexual behavior, drinking and driving, and aggressive or violent behavior.
- Treating others in a way they normally wouldn't (such as fighting or arguing).
- They act out of character and harm their reputation.
- Drinking may cause youth to have trouble in school or with the law.
- Increases the risk of alcohol problems later in life. Research shows that people who start drinking before the age of 15 are at a higher risk for developing alcohol use disorder (AUD) later in life.

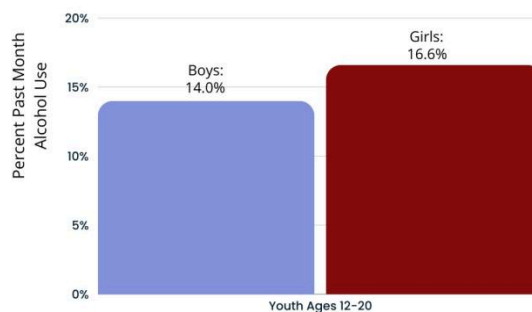
# Signs of Use

- Mood changes: flare-ups of temper, irritability, and defensiveness
- School problems: poor attendance, low grades, and/or recent disciplinary action
- Rebellion against family rules
- Friend changes: switching friends and a reluctance to let you get to know the new friends
- A “nothing matters” attitude: sloppy appearance, a lack of involvement in former interests, and general low energy
- Alcohol presence: finding it in your child’s room or backpack or smelling alcohol on his or her breath
- Physical or mental problems: memory lapses, poor concentration, bloodshot eyes, lack of coordination, or slurred speech

**More adolescents use alcohol than tobacco or marijuana**



**A comparison of U.S. boys and girls: Past-month alcohol use**



**SOURCE: 2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Tables 2.9B, 2.3B, 1.7B. Accessed December 12, 2023.**

- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0899328997900092>
- <https://alcoholthinkagain.com.au/alcohol-and-young-people/impact-of-alcohol>
- <https://adf.org.au/insights/alcohol-teenage-brain/>
- <https://www.talkitoutnc.org/effects-of-alcohol-on-teenage-brain/>