

What You May Not Know About Binge Drinking

The Problem

- The Centers for Disease Control report about 90% of the alcohol consumed by youth under the age of 21 in the United States, is in the form of binge drinks (5).
- According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, studies show that more than 35 percent of adults with an alcohol problem developed symptoms—such as binge drinking—by age 19.
- Impaired judgment is another risk associated with binge drinking. Those who have been binge drinking may drive drunk, or injure themselves or others.
- Impaired judgment may also lead to unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.
- In 2000, roughly one-third of pedestrians, 16 and older, who were killed in traffic accidents, were intoxicated. (*Kids Health*)
- Binge Drinking consists of drinking 5 or more drinks in a row, in a span of two weeks for men. It is four drinks for women, in the same time period.
- Heavy binge drinking is 3 or more episodes, in the span of two weeks.

Why Do Teens Binge Drink?

- Peer Pressure
- Curiosity
- Want to escape their present life and stress
- Thinks it will make them feel good but may not realize how sick they will be afterwards
- Want to feel older

(*Kids Health*)

Consequences of Binge Drinking

- Unintentional injuries (car crashes, drowning, falls, burns, etc.)
- Intentional injuries (domestic violence, sexual assault, firearm injuries, etc.)
- Alcohol poisoning
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Unintended pregnancy
- Children born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum disorders
- Liver disease
- Neurological problems
- High blood pressure, stroke and other cardiovascular problems.
- Poor control of diabetes.

Signs of Alcohol Poisoning

- Alcohol poisoning is the most life threatening consequence of binge drinking. It affects involuntary reflexes, including breathing and the gag reflex. If the gag reflex is not working, someone can choke on their own vomit and die.
- Bluish or pale skin
- Extreme confusion
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Low body temperature
- Slow or irregular breathing
- Inability to be awakened

Other Risks of Binge Drinking

- Impaired judgment
- Changes in personality
- Inability to sleep
- Lack of concentration
- Changes in relationships
- Poor school performance
- Alcoholism

Help for Binge Drinkers

- If you know someone who is a binge drinker, get help as soon as possible.
- Kids should talk to an adult they trust, about the problem.
- If kids don't feel comfortable talking to their parents, they should seek out other adults such as school counselors, teachers, doctors, clergy members or other relatives.
- If a teen has been binge drinking and wants out, they must ask for help.
- A supportive friend or adult could help these teens to avoid pressure situations, stop drinking or find counseling.
- Groups such as Al-Anon or Alateen can be a great source of support for teens.
<http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/>

(Kids Health)

Resources

- Kids Health.com, http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/alcohol/binge_drink.html
- About.com: Alcoholism, <http://alcoholism.about.com/cs/teens/a/blhbns040516.htm>
- Center for Advancement of Health, <http://www.cfah.org/hbns/news/teen05-14-04.cfm>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,
<http://ncadistore.samhsa.gov/catalog/facts.aspx?topic=159>
- Centers for Disease Control, http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/quickstats/binge_drinking.htm
- CNN.com, <http://www.cnn.com/2007/HEALTH/08/07/binge.drinking.ap/index.html>
- Web MD, <http://www.webmd.com/parenting/news/20070102/teen-binge-drinking-common-and-risky>
- Health Alliance on Alcohol,
http://www.healthallianceonalcohol.com/downloads/haa_talking_to_teens_underage_drinking.pdf