



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
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March 10, 2010 – Underage Drinking: Myths and Facts

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Kids hear things about alcohol from friends, tv, movies, and music, but what they hear isn't always true. Here are some common myths about drinking and the effects of alcohol, along with the actual facts.

Myth: All of the other kids drink alcohol. You have to drink if you want to fit in.

Fact: The truth is that most kids don't drink alcohol. Studies show that more than 70 percent of youth ages 12 to 20 haven't had a drink in the past month. If you want to fit in, then don't drink.

Myth: Alcohol isn't as harmful as other drugs.

Fact: Actually, alcohol is a major contributor to death from injuries which are the main cause of death for people under age 21. Drinking alcohol contributes to car accidents, homicides, drowning, and suicides. Drinking too much can cause alcohol poisoning which can be deadly.

Myth: Drinking is a good way to loosen up at parties.

Fact: Drinking is not a good way to loosen up. It can make you say stupid things that you would never normally say. It can also make you do things that you don't usually do, like get into fights, break laws, or have sex.

Myth: Drinking alcohol will make you cool.

Fact: There's nothing cool about doing embarrassing things that you will regret later on. Stumbling, falling, having a black-out, and throwing up are not cool.

Myth: You can sober up quickly by taking a cold shower, drinking coffee, or "walking it off."

Fact: It takes about 2 to 3 hours for a single drink to leave the body. There is nothing that can speed it up.

Myth: Adults drink, so kids should be able to drink too.

Fact: Drinking alcohol can alter the brain which continues to develop into the 20s. People who begin drinking before age 15 are five times as likely to abuse alcohol or become alcohol dependent than those who first use alcohol after age 21.

Myth: Beer and wine are safer than liquor.

Fact: Alcohol is alcohol no matter how you consume it. One 12-ounce can of beer, one 4-ounce glass of wine or one normal mixed drink or cocktail are all equally intoxicating. Alcopops often contain more alcohol than beer.

Myth: You can drink alcohol and not have any problems.

Fact: Drinking alcohol if you are under the age of 21 is a big problem because it is illegal. If you are caught, you may have to pay a fine, do community service, or take alcohol awareness classes. Kids who drink also are more likely to get poor grades in school, use other illicit drugs, and use tobacco. Drinking alcohol can cause problems for your friends too: about 45 percent of deaths in crashes involving an underage driver who has been drinking are people other than the driver.

These myths and facts are from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. You can find out more at their website at <http://toosmarttostart.samhsa.gov>.

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