

8 Questions About Alcohol and Teens



1 WHAT IS ALCOHOL?

Alcohol is made from fermented or distilled grains or fruit. It is usually a liquid. Alcohol is in beer, wine, coolers & hard liquor.



3 WHY DO TEENS USE ALCOHOL?

Alcohol is the most commonly used substance by teens. Adolescents may be curious and choose to use alcohol for a variety of reasons, including to:

- relax & have fun
- celebrate an event
- cope with difficult thoughts or feelings
- try something new
- socialize with friends

Using alcohol to cope is not a healthy strategy. Try music, reading, physical activity, hobbies, volunteering, hanging out with friends or talking with others about how you feel.

5 HOW ELSE CAN ALCOHOL AFFECT ME?

Most people get a 'hangover' (fatigue, headache, nausea and/or vomiting) after heavy drinking, which is in part mild alcohol withdrawal.

Drinking alcohol lowers inhibition & may lead people to make decisions they regret.



2 WHY IS ALCOHOL A DRUG?

Alcohol is not considered a food because it is not digested in the same way as food. It is a drug because of its mood-altering effects. Alcohol is absorbed from the stomach into the bloodstream and travels to the brain, where it impacts the person's mood and how the brain & body work together.

4 HOW DOES ALCOHOL AFFECT MY BRAIN & BODY?

Alcohol is a depressant; it slows down and disturbs communication between the brain & body. Alcohol affects things like speech, coordination, vision & decision-making, and triggers the brain's pleasure center. People start out feeling relaxed, but too much alcohol leads to vomiting, falling asleep or passing out (unconsciousness). Drinking too much alcohol can lead to alcohol poisoning.

6 WHEN DOES ALCOHOL USE BECOME A PROBLEM?

When it results in physical outcomes (eg. headaches, hangovers & black outs) and/or psychological, social and academic problems (eg. worsening mental health, arguing with others & falling grades). If a teen keeps using alcohol while experiencing these negative consequences, they likely have a problem.

7 WHAT DOES ALCOHOL OVERDOSE LOOK LIKE?

Alcohol overdose happens when the person drinks too much alcohol so quickly that the body cannot process it. Too much alcohol slows the body down until the person passes out (becomes unconscious). In extreme cases, alcohol can stop the body's autonomic functions, like breathing or the heartbeat.

Call 911 if you see the following:

- The person cannot be roused/does not respond to speech or touch (pinch an earlobe)
- The person's skin is cold and clammy, or lips and nails are slightly blue
- The person is throwing up without regaining consciousness

If the person is unconscious, place them on their side in the recovery position and call an ambulance.

8

HOW DO I LEARN MORE?



There is much more to learn about alcohol so you can be informed and TALK SMART.

Visit mentalhealthliteracy.org to get the info you need.