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**Think!**

before you

**Drink!**

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Source –

Better Health Channel-Alcohol and teenagers

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# Alcohol and young people

- Alcohol is widely used by young people. Around 90 per cent of Australian teenagers over the age of 14 years have tried alcohol at least once.
  - Alcohol is tolerated as a socially acceptable drug, yet it is responsible for most drug-related deaths in the teenage population.
  - It's difficult to prevent teenagers from experimenting with alcohol, but parents **can** encourage sensible drinking habits.
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# Alcohol and young people

- The safest level of drinking for teenagers is no drinking, especially for young people under 15 years of age.
  - If older teenagers **do** drink, parents can minimise the risks by providing adult supervision and encouraging consumption within the adult guideline for low-risk drinking (two standard drinks in any one day).
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## Parents belief about alcohol

- **Parents believe alcohol is less dangerous than other drugs.**



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## Parents belief about alcohol

- **Yet** it has been estimated that 3,430 Australians died due to alcohol use in 2003 and in 2001 there were 64,782 alcohol-related episodes that needed care in hospital.
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# Alcohol- the risks

Irresponsible use of alcohol can lead to:

- 'Binge drinking' or drinking too much on a single occasion
  - Drink driving
  - Unsafe sex
  - Impaired brain development
  - Injury or death.
  - Shame –
  - Relationship breakdown
  - Problems at school
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# Alcohol- the risks

- New Australian recommendations released in 2009 talk about drinking too much 'on a single occasion of drinking' rather than 'binge drinking', but the harm that can be done to the drinker and their community are essentially the same.

Drinking too much 'on a single occasion of drinking' means drinking significantly more than the recommended level of four standard drinks on any one occasion.

- Just over 10 per cent of Australian teenagers drink more than this every week.
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# Alcohol- the risks

## **Impaired brain development**

- Drinking alcohol can affect how the brain develops in young adults under the age of 25. Young people under 15 years of age are particularly at risk. Teenage brains are still developing and the areas of the brain that are undergoing the most dramatic changes during the teenage years are the frontal lobe and hippocampus. These areas are associated with motivation, impulse control and addiction.
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# Alcohol- the risks

## **Impaired brain development**

- Alcohol is a neurotoxin, which means it can poison the brain. One of the effects of excessive alcohol use is that it interferes with vitamin B absorption; this prevents the brain from working properly. Long-term drinking above the recommended levels may lead to a range of disorders, collectively known as alcohol-related brain damage. Symptoms can include learning and memory problems and difficulties with balance.
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# Parental role modelling

Studies have shown that the most influential role models for children are their parents. Children learn by imitation, so it is important that parents demonstrate sensible drinking behaviours. Suggestions include:

- Drink moderately or not at all.
  - Don't drink every time you socialise.
  - Never drink drive.
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# Ways to prevent alcohol abuse

According to Australian research, there are many important factors that help reduce the likelihood of a young person abusing alcohol. As well as good parental role modelling, these factors include:

- A loving, supportive home life
  - Educational programs in schools on the use and misuse of alcohol
  - Development of personal, social, academic and employment skills
  - A healthy lifestyle and regular exercise.
  - Restrictions on alcohol advertising
  - Avoiding the use of scare tactics, which can backfire and increase alcohol use among teenagers.
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# Getting help

- Your doctor
  - Drug Info Clearinghouse Tel. 1300 858 584 – for information
  - Direct Line Tel. 1800 888 236 – for 24-hour confidential drug and alcohol telephone counselling, information and referral
  - Alcoholics Anonymous
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## Don't forget...

- Around 90 per cent of Australian teenagers over the age of 14 years have tried alcohol at least once.
  - Alcohol is responsible for most drug-related deaths in the teenage population.
  - Parents may not be able to prevent their teenager from experimenting with alcohol, but they can encourage sensible drinking habits.
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The

**End**

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