

Tips for Reducing Underage Binge Drinking

Parents Still Greatest Influence Over Children

By [Buddy T](#), About.com Guide Updated November 28, 2011

A report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that 45 percent of teenagers drink alcohol, and of those who drink, 64 percent admit to binge drinking.

Not only is consuming five or more drinks in a row a dangerous practice itself, the CDC found that teen binge drinking is strongly associated with other risky behaviors, such as sexual activity and violence.

Parents Do Have Influence

As a result of the CDC report, New York University Child Study Center developed five tips for parents to use to curb teen binge drinking by maximizing the influence they have over their children's decision-making.

"Contrary to popular belief, parents remain the greatest influence over their children's behavior," said Richard Gallagher, Ph.D., Director of the Parenting Institute and the Thriving Teens Project at the NYU Child Study Center, in a news release. "Though media and peers play a role, parental influence is critical and there are ways parents can maximize that influence to reduce the likelihood that their children will engage in binge drinking."

Tips for Parents

Dr. Gallagher suggests these five tips to help parents curb teen binge drinking:

- **Clearly state what actions you expect your teen to take** when confronted with substance use. Teens who know what their parents expect from them are much less likely to use substances, including alcohol.
- **Talk about the alcohol use that your children observe.** Parents need to make it clear how they want their children to handle substances, such as alcohol and tobacco. Children need to have controlled exposure to learn the rules of acceptable use.
- **Help your teen find leisure activities** and places for leisure activities that are substance-free. Then, keep track of where, with whom, and what your teen is doing after school and during other free times.
- **Limit the access your children have to substances.** Teens use substances that are available. They report that they sneak alcohol from home stocks, take cigarettes from relatives, and obtain marijuana from people that they know well.
- **Inform teens about the honest dangers** that are associated with alcohol use and abuse. Although teens are not highly influenced by such information, some discussion of negative consequences has some impact on the decisions they make. Especially emphasize how alcohol clouds one's judgment and makes one more likely to be harmed in other ways.

According to the CDC, binge drinking is associated with unintentional injuries (such as car crashes, falls and burns), intentional injuries (firearm injuries and sexual assault), alcohol poisoning, sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancy, among other health problems.

Is your child using drugs or alcohol? Are you sure? Answering [these 20 questions](#) can help you recognize some of the tell-tell signs.

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