

# Alcohol and Your Teen: The 411 on Underage Drinking



**By: Dava Cook**

# It's Time To Test Your Alcohol I.Q...



**Q: What is the number one choice of drug among teenagers?**

**A: Alcohol**

(Rabb, 1999)

# It's Time To Test Your Alcohol I.Q...



**Q:** In the next 24 hours how many teenagers will try alcohol for the first time?

**A: 10,000**

(Rabb, 1999)

# It's Time To Test Your Alcohol I.Q...



**Q:** Is alcohol a:  
  
Stimulant  
  
Depressant  
  
Hallucinogen

**A:** Depressant.  
It slows down  
the central  
nervous  
system. It  
affects  
judgment and  
coordination.

(Kowalski, 2000)

# It's Time To Test Your Alcohol I.Q...



**Q: What is binge drinking?**

**A: Binge drinking is consuming many alcoholic drinks in a short amount of time. For males it is consuming five drinks in a row, and for females it is consuming four drinks in a row. (Kowalski, 1998)**

# It's Time To Test Your Alcohol I.Q...



**Q: Which alcoholic drink has the most alcohol by volume in it?** (Texas Commission

on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, in press)



A 1.5 oz of 80 proof liquor



A 12 oz. Beer



A 5 oz. glass of wine

# It's Time To Test Your Alcohol I.Q...



**A: They all have the same amount of alcohol in them.**

(Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, in press)



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# It's Time To Test Your Alcohol I.Q...



**Q:** What is an “Alcopop”?

**A:** Sweet, malt-liquor beverages such as wine coolers, Smirnoff Ice, or Mike’s Hard Lemonade

*(Alcopops: Sweet-tasting, fizzy alcoholic beverages, n.d.)*

These all have the same amount of alcohol as a 12 oz. beer, 5 oz. of wine, 1.5 oz. of liquor. (MADD, n.d.)

# It's Time To Test Your Alcohol I.Q...

**Q:** Drinking alcohol 4 to 5 times a week as a teenager, will cause the teen's brain to look like a \_\_\_\_\_ brain at the age of 30?

-40 yr. old    -50 yr. old

-60 yr. old    -70 yr. old

**A:** A teen's brain will be like that of a 70 year old if they drink 4 to 5 times a week.

(Rabb, 1999)

# Alcohol's Effect on a Teen's Brain



## The Facts:

- **Teens who use alcohol before age 15 are five times more likely to abuse alcohol than those who first use alcohol at age 21 or older**
- **Teens who drink stand a great chance of turning to alcohol as a way of coping with problems instead of dealing with them.**
- **Teens who drink alcohol may have lasting effects on their ability to learn and their memory.**

(Drug Info Clearinghouse, 2005)

# Alcohol's Effect of a Teen's Brain



The brain images below show how alcohol may harm teen mental function. Compared with a young non-drinker, a 15-year-old with an alcohol problem showed poor brain activity during a memory task. This finding is noted by the lack of pink and red coloring.



**(White, 2004)**

Image from Susan Tapert, PhD, University of California, San Diego.

# Is Alcohol REALLY a problem for Junior High Students?



- **There is an estimated 3 million alcoholic teenagers in America** (*Alcohol and Teen Drinking*, 2000)
- **51% of teenagers who consume alcohol have done so by 8<sup>th</sup> grade** (McMahon, 2003)
- **The average age for boys trying alcohol is 11 years old; for girls it is 13 years old** (*Alcohol and Teen Drinking*, 2000)
- **Binge drinking often begins at age 13**  
(*Alcohol and Teen Drinking*, 2000)
- **41% of teens between 14-18 have tried an “alcopop”**  
(*Alcopops: Sweet-tasting, fizzy alcoholic beverages*, n.d.)

# What Can A Parent Do?



## Watch for Signs of Alcohol Use:

- Sudden change in habits or in behavior
- Missing or watered-down alcohol at home
- Change in peer groups
- Incoherent or slurred speech
- Becoming more secretive

(McMahon, 2003)

# What Can A Parent Do?



## Remember your Parental Rights and Responsibilities:

- ✓ You have the right to know where your kids are, and who their friends are, as well as who they are with at any given time
- ✓ You have the right verify your child's whereabouts
- ✓ You have the right not to condone any alcohol usage and to not to let your child participate in activities where alcohol is served
- ✓ You have a right to have family rules and enforce them with appropriate consequences

(McMahon, 2003)

# Where Can A Parent Find Help?



- **National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information: 1-800-729-6686**
- **National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Help Line: 1-800-622-2255**
- **National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service: 1-800-662-4357**

(Kowalski, 2000)

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