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English 10

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How To Stop Underage Drinking

Drinking underage can have a lasting impact for an adolescent's brain, along with an increased risk of suicide and homicide, alcohol-related car crashes, and other unintended injuries including burns, falls, or drowning (CDC).  Drinking in general has detrimental effects, but it is especially hazardous for people whose brains are still developing. In 2022, 5.8 million children aged 12 to 20 reported drinking alcohol more than "just a few sips" in the previous month (NIAAA). This figure is concerning since not only is it illegal, but drinking among teenagers increases the risk of premature death and injury. In 2011, around 188,000 people under the age of 21 visited the emergency room for alcohol-related injuries (NIAAA). Ways to reduce underage drinking include teaching youth about the dangers of alcohol, developing safer alcohol storage practices, and enrolling youth in afterschool programs.

One way to curb alcohol consumption among teens is education on the dangers and negative health effects. Parents need to first educate their children on the effects of alcohol because they are the first to influence their children’s actions and in most cases are the first to notice when their child is acting strangely. Schools are the next line of defense against underage drinking; schools can repeatedly, over many years, drive home that the dangers are real and present with assemblies and intervention practices and discipline. The media is another factor in showing how alcohol can negatively affect your life from showing dependence later in life, to accidents, and even death.  Education is one way to prevent underage drinking with parents, schools, and the media.

Implementing safe alcohol storage practices in the home is vital for preventing misuse by children and teens. The best way to keep your teens from accessing liquor, beer, and wine is to not have any in the home; the most common place teens get alcohol is their own home. If you can’t, or don’t want to, give up alcohol in the home, another good option is a liquor cabinet; you can keep the cabinet locked and your bottles safe.  One more good option is marking levels of alcohol in each bottle with pencil and storing them in the freezer, this way if the bottle is replaced with water, it will be very obvious. Ways to keep your children from alcohol include locking them in a liquor cabinet, not keeping alcohol in the home, and marking and keeping the bottles in the freezer.

Lack of adult supervision is a large factor in substance abuse, not just alcohol. “About 40 percent of adolescents’ waking hours are discretionary… and many young adolescents spend virtually all of this time without companionship or supervision by responsible adults” (NIH). One way to fill this time is with physical activities such as school sports or municipal athletics. Another beneficial way is academic enrichment with tutoring or additional instruction. Older students could benefit from internships, practical skills lessons, and working a job. Underage drinking can be prevented with more adolescents in after school programs and extracurricular activities.

Underage drinking is a widespread issue that affects communities across the state; however, there are effective ways to prevent teens indulging. The most effective ways to avert children consuming alcohol are: registering children in after-school programs, educating students about the risks caused by drinking, creating safer methods for storing alcohol. I hope one day soon we will live in a world where no mother is left mourning the death of her child because of careless action by a drunk driver.

Works Cited

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