



INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES REGARDING ADOLESCENCE AND USE OF ALCOHOL

The John XXIII Parent Community in partnership with the College aims to work cohesively to provide our children with the best opportunities to reach their full potential. Together we can help our children and young people to be strong, resilient and empowered individuals.

OUR COMMUNITY WORKING TOGETHER

Our community is living within a culture in which alcohol is prominent and widely available. This pamphlet aims to help parents understand the current views of why alcohol is not a safe option for adolescents. It also provides some suggestions about how parents can inform their children about alcohol to help reduce the risk of harm to them. Each family is unique and it is important that you adapt the information provided to your own situation.

KEY MESSAGE TO PARENTS

While experimenting with alcohol has in the past been considered normal throughout adolescence, recent research shows this generational attitude needs to change. In 2009, updated drinking guidelines were released by the National Health and Medical Research Council to reduce health risks associated with drinking alcohol. These guidelines are based on the best available evidence.

The Australian Guidelines To Reduce Health Risks From Drinking Alcohol Are: Children under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking and that for this age group, not drinking alcohol is especially important. For young people aged 15-17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible.

EFFECT ON BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

The longer the human brain can avoid alcohol, the better chance it has to develop its full potential. The brain - in particular the hippocampus and the prefrontal cortex - continues to develop into the early to mid 20's making it vulnerable to the toxic effects of alcohol. Damage to this part of the brain during development can have lifelong consequences for memory, personality and behaviour.

Young brains are more sensitive to the effect of alcohol on the structure and function of the brain and at the same time they are less sensitive to cues that serve to moderate alcohol consumption.

Young people are also generally smaller, having a lower tolerance to alcohol all of which can contribute to a range of short and long term harms, including the potential for serious harm or death due to an alcohol overdose.

FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE DRINKING

- Drinking alcohol is often perceived as "adult behaviour"
- The belief among teenagers that all their peers are drinking. However research shows young people often over-estimate how much their peers are drinking. This is a problem if they try to match this "inflated" perceived level of peer-drinking
- The deliberate marketing of alcohol to a young demographic
- The attitude and example of parents and other significant adults

STRATEGIES TO HELP: WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Parents want to minimise the risks teenagers take, whilst at the same time allowing them the opportunity to develop inner strength and resilience as they achieve independence.

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Parenting Adolescents:
www.parentingstrategies.net

Paul Dillon:
www.darta.net.au

McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth
www.mcaay.org.au

Teenage Parties:
www.alcoholthinkagain.com.au

A COMMUNITY WORKING TOGETHER TIPS FOR TEEN PARTIES

Hosting and attending parties can be fun for everyone. Teenage gatherings provide important opportunities for our children to mix and gain experiences in social situations and teaches them how to be responsible guests and hosts.

Planning is the key to hosting a safe and enjoyable party: talk to your teenager to establish some strong ground rules. Appropriate adult supervision and firm restrictions of drugs, alcohol and uninvited guests are important considerations.

SHOULD I ALLOW ALCOHOL AT MY TEEN'S PARTY?

- It is not advisable to allow children under the age of 18 to drink alcohol. We now know that it is important to delay the introduction of alcohol to young people for as long as possible.
- As a parent you have certain responsibilities when holding a party for teenagers so saying "NO" is appropriate.
- You are responsible for providing information to parents of children who are attending your party.
- You must provide a safe environment for your guests.
- You have a responsibility to ensure the party is adequately supervised at all times.
- You should be aware of your "duty-of-care" There may be legal implications if you do not act responsibly when you host a party for teenagers.
- Be prepared to look after another person's child as you would wish your own child to be cared for in the same situation.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF ALCOHOL IS BROUGHT TO MY TEEN'S PARTY?

- If a guest arrives with alcohol, confiscate it and call the parents to inform them and have them collect it.
- As a safeguard you can collect bags and coats at the entry point and store in a safe place until guests leave. This will reduce the chance of alcohol and drugs being present at the party.
- If a teenager arrives at the party under the influence of alcohol, call their parents to arrange collection and keep them safe until their lift home arrives. (Do not leave an unwell child alone. Call an ambulance 000 if you have any concerns.)

DISCLAIMER

These guidelines are not intended to reflect all strategies for dealing with the challenges of hosting parties with adolescents, but are designed to serve as a resource for parents, students and schools. The information contained herein is not intended to replace professional advice, whether medical, legal or other. Each individual situation is different. John XXIII College disclaims liability of any kind resulting from the use of these guidelines.

AN ALCOHOL FREE PARTY IS THE BEST OPTION