



# Helping your child stay safer around alcohol



## Did you know?

- Alcohol is the most commonly used legal drug by 12-17 year old WA students.
- Of those students who drank in the last week (18%), over 36% drank alcohol at risky levels.
- Parents and friends are the most common source of obtaining alcohol for young people.
- Parents have a 'duty of care' and are considered liable for any outcomes that may result from alcohol and other drug use in their home.
- It's illegal to purchase alcohol for young people under 18 years.
- It's illegal to drink in public places, such as on the street, in a park or at the beach.
- It's illegal for young people under 18 years to possess alcohol (opened or un-opened) in a public place?

Studies show that parents and families are strong influences in what young people think about alcohol and how they use it.<sup>1</sup> Delaying your child's alcohol use and encouraging negative attitudes toward 'binge' drinking can protect your child from the likelihood of alcohol use problems.

## New research on kids' brains and alcohol

It used to be thought that the teenage brain was the same as an adult brain (ie that it had already reached full development). Now the science is telling us that from 12 or 13 years to the early twenties the brain is in a state of intense development and hardwiring.

Through a process called 'frontalisation' the brain is growing and forming all the critical parts it needs for learning, memory, and planning.

Alcohol has the potential to disrupt this crucial window of development leading to learning difficulties, memory impairment and emotional problems like depression and anxiety.

The National Health and Medical Research Council's 2009 guidelines for children and young people state that 'not drinking at all' is the safest option. Parents and carers are advised that children **under 15 years** are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking alcohol and that for this age group, not drinking is especially important.

## Remember

- If you drink alcohol, you're a role model – try to drink within safe limits.
- If you don't drink alcohol, talk about why you don't.
- Talk to your child about the effects of excessive use of alcohol on their young brains.
- Try to limit your child's access to alcohol.
- Give your child a reason not to use alcohol or other drugs and to also save face – let them know it's okay to say 'Mum and Dad will ground me if I do that!'

Do you have some rules about alcohol use in your family? Check with your child to make sure they know these family rules!

For advice, counselling or information about alcohol call **Alcohol and Drug Information Service** (ADIS) on (08) 9442 5000 (24 hours) or 1800 198 024 (country callers), or **Parent Drug Information Service** (PDIS) (08) 9442 5050 (24 hours) or 1800 653 203 (country callers).

<sup>1</sup> Shanahan, P. and Hewitt, N. Developmental research for a National Alcohol Campaign: Summary report, Department of Health and Aged Care, ACT, 1999

Thank you for playing a vital role in your child's health and drug education.