

TALK NOW

Underage Drinking Fact Sheet

What are the facts?

Kansas youth say it's easy for them to obtain alcohol, according to the Communities That Care Student Survey:

- 47% say their parents would not catch them if they drank alcohol.
- Most youth get alcohol from home without parents' permission.
- More than 50% of Kansas youth say they would be seen as "cool" for drinking alcohol regularly.
- 14% of 6th graders and 34% of 8th graders have drunk alcohol at least once in the last 30 days; percentages spike to 48% for 10th graders and 55% for 12th graders.
- Many Kansas youth begin drinking as young as age 12.

Why should parents be concerned?

Young people who start drinking before age 15 are **four times more likely** to develop alcohol addiction than those who start after age 21. Alcohol is *not* a harmless "rite of passage."

The use of alcohol, by itself or with other drugs, can retard normal growth and development. Drinking and the use of other drugs can lead to greater sexual activity, violence, problems at school, car crashes, and suicide.

Can parents really help?

Yes! Parents provide the greatest influence for youth ages 12-14 in their decision to not use drugs. You CAN help your child resist peer pressure by instilling in him/her a sense of self-confidence.

Learn the facts! *Talk often with your child.*

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What can parents do?

- Start **TALKing NOW** with your child about alcohol and other drugs!
- Set a strong no-use policy for your child.
- Determine now clear/consistent consequences if your child uses alcohol or other drugs. Consequences must be reasonable, meaningful to your child and relate to the offense.
- Help your child learn ways of saying NO!
- Monitor your own behavior if you use alcohol—don't drink under unsafe conditions, don't make light of getting drunk, and never show drinking as a way of coping with problems.



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To Your Child About Alcohol

When do you start talking?

When do you think you should begin to talk with your children about alcohol? Do you think elementary or even middle school is too early? Can't it just wait until high school or when they start driving?

The fact is, Kansas youth begin experimenting with alcohol around age 12. *That is only 6th grade!* By that age, they already have been bombarded by messages from TV, radio, movies and magazines that encourage drinking and other risk-taking behaviors.

We can't control all social influences on our children's lives. But as parents, **we** are a social influence. We can influence their choices by our values and expectations about drinking.

As parents, we *must* help our children understand the facts about alcohol, sort through the messages they receive, and clearly understand the consequences of underage drinking.

But what do you say?

Use teachable moments. For instance, during beer commercials, talk about what the advertisers want you to believe; then talk facts!

Clearly set expectations about alcohol with your children:

- Establish expectations and consequences before a problem occurs.
- Share your expectations and consequences clearly and calmly.
- Choose consequences that are reasonable, meaningful to the child and relate to the offense.
- Consistently monitor your child's behavior—for example, make sure parties are chaperoned and won't serve alcohol.
- Enforce consequences.

Tell your kids the facts

- Anyone can develop alcoholism.
- Anyone who makes high-risk drinking choices may be involved in a car crash.
- Getting drunk is always high-risk, even when celebrating.
- The only factor we can control in reducing our risk for an alcohol problem is how much/how often we drink.
- Find ways other than drinking to feel better when feeling down.

Remember!

Children who have a strong bond with their parents are less likely to use alcohol.

The influence of peers does increase as our children get older, **BUT** the influence of parents never disappears unless we stop acting like parents.

Maintaining a close parent/child relationship requires:

- Unconditional love.
- Active listening.
- Providing appropriate limits and discipline.

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Test your knowledge of underage drinking

1. The average age for youth to start drinking in Kansas is closest to:
a) 10 b) 12 c) 14 d) 16
2. Alcohol is linked to which of the following:
a) teen suicide b) teen pregnancy
c) teen violence d) teen homicide e) all
3. The drug of choice for Kansas youth is:
a) marijuana b) inhalants
c) alcohol d) cocaine
4. Alcohol-related injuries are the single leading cause of death among youth and young adults.
a) True b) False
5. Young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times as likely to develop alcoholism than those who begin drinking after age 21.
a) True b) False
6. Young people who get a consistent and strong “no-use” message from their parents are three times less likely to get involved in alcohol or other drugs.
a) True b) False
7. Nationally, what percentage of youth report that their parents talk a lot to them about drugs?
a) 10 percent b) 25 percent
c) 30 percent d) 50 percent
8. When should parents begin talking with their children about alcohol and other drugs?
a) elementary school
b) middle school
c) high school
d) when they have caught their child using alcohol or other drugs.
9. Older teenagers who drink usually get alcohol from their friends, but younger teenagers usually get alcohol from:
a) adults who buy for them
b) older brothers and sisters
c) their home
d) older teenagers
10. Youth ages 12-14 report that their decision to use or not use alcohol or other drugs is most influenced by:
a) their friends b) their parents
c) their siblings d) teachers

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Answers to underage drinking test

1b. The average age of beginning to drink alcohol in Kansas is 12.5.

7b. Only 25 percent of youth report that their parents talk to them a lot about drugs.

2e. All of the above. Alcohol is linked to teen suicide, teen pregnancy, teen violence, and teen homicide. Alcohol is a major factor in 50 percent of automobile crashes.

8a. Parents should begin talking with their kids about alcohol and other drugs before they are exposed. It is not too early to talk with your children about the dangers of drugs and begin to help them develop refusal skills in elementary school. In fact, it is essential!

3c. Alcohol is the drug of choice for Kansas youth.

4a. True. Alcohol-related injuries are the single leading cause of death among youth and young adults.

9c. Young teenagers usually get alcohol from their home *without their parents' permission*.

5b. True. Young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times as likely to develop alcoholism than those who begin drinking after age 21.

10b. Youth ages 12-14 report that their parents influence them the most in their decision to use or not to use drugs.

6a. True. Young people who get a consistent and strong "no-use" message from their parents are three times less likely to get involved in alcohol or other drugs.

Parents Make a Difference!

