The Dangers of Drinking

- Alcohol is the number one drug of choice for teenagers.
- Alcohol-related car crashes are the number one killer of teenagers in the United States.
- Alcohol is the number one drug problem in America.

If you think it can't happen to you, look around. Check your school's yearbooks for the last ten years. How many were dedicated to a student who was killed in a drunk driving crash?

Ask your friends how many people they know who have had bad things happen to them when they or someone else was drinking.

You don't even have to be the one doing the drinking — most teenage passenger deaths are the result of crashes caused by alcohol-impaired teenage drivers. No matter what the situation, drinking alcohol under the age of 21 is illegal.

How Does Alcohol Affect You?

- You see double, slur your speech, you lose your sense of distance.
- Alcohol loosens your inhibitions; you make bad judgments that can result in car crashes, violence, unwanted pregnancy, sexual transmission of diseases, or rape.
- A significant portion of violent crimes and vandalism among and by youth involve use of alcohol.
- Using alcohol can cost you your freedom. You can be grounded by parents, lose your driver's license, or end up in jail.
- You can get sick or die from alcohol poisoning.
- Poor grades may be a result of increased use of alcohol.

Be Smart About Advertising

Take a good look at how the alcohol industry tries to convince people to use its products.

- The models on the beer commercials are always young, fit, and beautiful. But alcohol has plenty of calories and little nutritional value. Drinking it will not make you fitter or more attractive.
- Advertisements feature celebrities and sports figures, but drinking will not make you famous or athletic.
- Alcohol advertisers are now reminding people not to drink and drive. But drunk driving is not the only way alcohol can mess up your life.
- Advertisers hope you won't stop and think when you see their ads. Don't be conned. Use your own judgment, not theirs, and learn the facts.

More Facts About Alcohol

- The earlier young people start drinking and using drugs, the more likely they are to become addicted.
- Drinking coffee, taking a cold shower, exercising, or breathing fresh air will not sober you up. The only thing that sobers you up is time — at least several hours.
- One beer, one shot of whiskey, and one glass of wine all have the same amount of alcohol. Don't fall for the myth that beer and wine are less intoxicating than hard liquor.

- Only 3 to 5 percent of alcoholics are what we think of as bums. Most alcoholics are just like people you know. Anyone can become an alcoholic — young, old, rich, poor, single, married, employed, or out-of-work.
- Drinking alcohol does not quench your thirst; it causes dehydration.
- Alcohol interferes with your central nervous system. You lose balance, coordination, and judgment.
- Alcohol ages and damages the brain.
- Alcoholism is hereditary.
- Eight young people a day die in alcohol related crashes.
- Teens who drink alcohol are 7.5 times more likely to use any illicit drug, and 50 times more likely to use cocaine than young people who never drink alcohol.
- You are breaking the law by buying or using alcohol before you are 21 years old.

Take Action

- Make a pledge with your friends that you will help each other avoid alcohol and other drugs. Leave parties where kids are drinking.
- If a friend, or someone you know, has passed out from drinking too much alcohol, turn the person on his or her side and call 911 or your local emergency number for help. Too much alcohol can cause the central nervous system, which controls breathing, to shut down. Death can result.
- Don't ride with someone who has been drinking. Call a taxi, your parents, or another relative or friend for a ride.
- Encourage someone you think has a drinking problem to get help. Go with them to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings or to meet with a counselor.
- Suggest that members of any club or youth group you belong to organize an anti-drinking project — an alcohol-free post-prom, graduation, or New Year's Eve party.
- Make a presentation to your school's PTA meeting about how teachers and parents can realistically help kids avoid drugs and alcohol.
- Ask for help if someone is pressuring you to try alcohol or other drugs. Talk to someone you trust.

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