

SORTED

Substance Use and Misuse Team

Alcohol Parent/Guardian Resource

Introduction

Alcohol is one of the most widely used legal substances in the UK and is easily accessed by young people. Drinking culture often plays a large role in how teenagers see and use alcohol. However, not many young people and/or adults are well informed about the consequences around drinking alcohol. This resource has been created to provide information to support conversation with your child about alcohol. You will read about what alcohol is, the short and long term effects of drinking, as well as the legal implications of introducing alcohol during adolescence.

What Is Alcohol?

Alcohol is the chemical used to make alcoholic drinks, such as wine, beer and spirits. There are different types of the chemical alcohol. **HOWEVER** the **ONLY** type of alcohol that is safe to use in production of alcoholic drinks is ethanol. Ethanol is made when yeast, sugar and starch go through the fermentation process.

What Is An Alcoholic Drink?

An alcoholic drink is made when ethanol (alcohol) is mixed with flavoured water. Alcoholic drinks can vary in different flavours, and strengths.



A small single shot (25ml) of spirit i.e. vodka is 1 unit, and can be mixed with lots of different non alcoholic drinks like cocoa cola



One small glass of wine has roughly 1.5 units



One bottle of beer has 1.7 units

What Is A Unit?

A unit is a measurement of how much alcohol is in an alcoholic drink. It helps us understand and keep track of how much alcohol we are consuming. **It takes your body approximately 1hr to process 1 unit of alcohol.** However, a huge range of factors can affect this. It is recommended adults drink no more than 14 units spread across the week.

You can read more about alcohol, alcoholic drinks and units here at [What is alcohol made from? Ingredients, chemicals and manufacture](#) | [Drinkaware](#) and [Alcohol units](#) | [Alcohol Change UK](#)

Short Term Effects

Alcohol effects people differently when drinking it. There are a number of short term effects and the effects may vary depending on how much you drink, your size, if you've eaten anything, and even the mood you yourself are in before-hand. The same drink can affect two people completely differently in terms of the emotional and physical effects.

- Confident
- Lack of inhibitions
- Giggles
- Sad/Tearful
- Distorted vision and hearing
- Different Short Term Effects**
- Sleepy
- Lack of coordination
- Drowsiness
- Slurred speech
- Impaired judgement
- Dizziness
- Hyper
- Aggressive

Long Term Effects

It is important to be aware of the long term effects, this will help you to make informed decisions now about how to look after your health. There are a number of long term effects cited on the NHS website some of which are listed here. The type of illnesses you can develop after 10 to 20 years of regularly drinking more than 14 units a week include -

- Addiction
- Stroke
- Damage to the nervous system
- Different Long Term Effects**
- Brain Damage
- Cancers of the mouth, throat and breast
- Liver Disease
- Heart Disease

You can read more about the short term effects of drinking [Alcohol misuse - Risks - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#), as well as the long term effects of drinking alcohol [The risks of drinking too much - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

Alcohol Poisoning

Alcohol poisoning happens when the body cannot process the amount of alcohol that has been consumed, it usually happens when a large amount of alcohol has been consumed in a short space of time. What is considered a large amount can vary from person to person, and there is no agreed definition of what constitutes a 'large' amount. The amount of alcohol in the blood can change how the body reacts and responds.

Signs Of Alcohol Poisoning

ATTENTION

- Slowed down brain functions - loss of sense of balance or severely slurred speech
- Irritated stomach causing vomiting
- Affected nerves that control a person's breathing and heartbeat – irregular or slow breathing
- Dehydration
- Lowered body temperature, which can lead to hypothermia – person feels cold, looks pale or blue-tinged
- Lowered blood sugar levels
- Confused, conscious but unresponsive

What Should You Do If You Suspect Alcohol Poisoning?

DO –

- Give the person sips of water to drink
- Keep them sitting up and awake if possible, if not place them in the recovery position (more info on this on the [NHS website](#))
- Keep them warm
- Stay with them and monitor their symptoms

DO NOT –

- Give them coffee
- Give them more alcohol
- Give them a cold shower
- Walk them around

Most importantly call 999 and ask for help. Whatever the situation, if someone is displaying symptoms of alcohol poisoning, their life could be at risk, do not be afraid to call for help.

You can read more about alcohol poisoning on the NHS website [Alcohol poisoning - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#).

Alcohol and The Law

The following information is taken from [alcohol and young people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) and should be considered when choosing to consume alcohol as a young person, or buying alcohol for a young person.

Young people can be stopped, fined or arrested by police if they're under 18 and drinking alcohol in public.

It's against the law:

- for someone to sell a young person under 18 alcohol
- to buy or try to buy alcohol as a young person under 18
- for an adult to buy or try to buy alcohol for a young person under 18
- to drink alcohol in licensed premises (such as a pub or restaurant) as a young person under 18
- it's illegal to give alcohol to children under 5.



However, if you're 16 or 17 and accompanied by an adult, you can drink (but not buy) beer, wine or cider with a meal.

How Can I Help My Child?

It can be difficult to know the best way to support your child if you are concerned. Speaking with professionals already working with your child is the first step such as teachers, and key workers. Below are local and national services to find more information and support for your child.



Local

- Adolescent Development Team
 - SORTED
 - sorted@hillingdon.gov.uk
 - 01895 250 721
- ARCH Hillingdon
 - 01895 207 777
 - arch.hillingdon@nhs.net

National

- Alcohol change alcoholchange.org.uk
- Drinkaware drinkaware.co.uk
- Frank - talktofrank.com
 - 0300 123 6600
 - frank@talktofrank.com
 - text - 82111

- ADFAM - adfam.org.uk
- Childline - 0800 1111
- The Childrens Society - childrenssociety.org.uk
- MIND - mind.org.uk
- youngminds - youngminds.org.uk

