

KEEP YOUR KIDS

DRUG

ALCOHOL

THC

NICOTINE

JUUL®

LIQUOR

METH

VAPE

MARIJUANA

BOOZE

TOBACCO

POT

SUBSTANCE

FREE

ALCOHOL

Teen drinking negatively impacts physical and mental health.

Know the Risks

While movies, music and even other parents may try to convince us that youth drinking is “just being young and having fun,” make no mistake: it presents serious dangers. Those who start drinking as young teens are 4X MORE likely to develop alcohol dependence than someone who waits until adulthood. Youth who drink are more vulnerable and at a higher risk of becoming victims of violent crimes such as rape, assault and robbery. Driving under the influence is a leading cause of fatal car crashes, and youth drinking is linked to struggles with mental health, such as anxiety and depression. These may be at the core of a teen’s drinking. The younger they start, the greater these risks become.

Know the Facts

- Underage drinking, a high-risk behavior, is growing in our region. In Region II, almost **40% of twelfth graders** report current alcohol use (one or more drinks during the past 30 days).
- In a survey, **13.9% of twelfth graders** report regularly binge drinking (five or more alcoholic drinks within one hour, at least once a month). Binge drinking, the most common form of excessive drinking, is defined as consuming:
 - For women, 4 or more drinks during a single occasion.
 - For men, 5 or more drinks during a single occasion.
- The chance of a youth being in a **fatal crash increases by up to 380X** when drinking.
- Almost **20% of Region II youth** reported riding with someone who had been drinking within the 30 days prior to the survey.
- When surveyed, **59% of twelfth graders** report it’s easy to get alcohol, and **42%** say they got alcohol at parties.
- **Early-onset alcoholism** is exacerbated by **parental absence**, a growing problem in rural America. Many factors underlie this problem, but **more quality time with parents lowers risks**.
- **A family history of alcoholism** increases the risk of addiction for youth who drink underage. The earlier they start and the more they drink, the greater the risk.
- Know the signs that indicate kids may be using alcohol:
 - Mood changes (irritability and defensiveness or signs of depression)
 - Problems in school (grades or disciplinary problems)
 - Relationship issues (changes in friends, rebellion against or anger with family)

Focus on Prevention

Providing facts in an open, honest environment is the best first step to help youth avoid this risk. Ask for their input and how you can help them resist pressure to drink. Be clear about expectations and ask open-ended questions so they feel comfortable sharing with you. Because some youth self-medicate with alcohol to cover feelings of anxiety or depression, speak openly about this and offer them support, not judgment. Consider talking with your doctor about the emotional and mental health challenges that may be causing your kids to drink, especially if there is a family history of alcohol addiction. Finally, be committed to modeling responsible drinking behavior and NEVER provide alcohol or allow consumption by those under 21 in your home.

