
Youth and Binge Drinking

What You Need to Know



What is binge drinking?

Binge drinking is when someone drinks a large amount of alcohol in a short period (about 2 hours). Binge drinking, the most common form of excessive alcohol use, is defined as consuming 4 or more drinks during a single occasion (about 2 hours) for women and 5 or more drinks during a single occasion (about 2 hours) for men. Binge drinking is unsafe for everyone.

A drink is defined as 5-ounces of wine, 12-ounces of regular beer or wine cooler, 8-ounces of malt liquor, 1.5-ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits or liquor (i.e. gin, rum, vodka, whiskey).

Binge drinking is unsafe for everyone.

How common is youth binge drinking?

- About 90% of the alcohol consumed by youth under the age of 21 in the United States is in the form of binge drinking.
- Excessive alcohol consumption contributes to more than 4,300 deaths among youth under the age of 21 years in the United States each year.
- About 2 in 3 high school students who drink do so to the point of intoxication.
- About 1 in 5 high school girls binge drink.
- In 2010, there were approximately 189,000 emergency room visits by persons under age 21 for injuries and other conditions linked to alcohol.

What are the dangers of binge drinking?

Drinking games, dares and bets encourage people to drink too much, too fast, which can lead to alcohol poisoning (overdose on alcohol). Alcohol poisoning is unsafe and can result in death.

Binge drinking harms your brain, liver and pancreas; raises the risk for cancer of the liver, mouth, throat and voice box; and can also cause weight gain and high blood pressure. Binge drinking also has other dangers such as poor choices, unprotected sexual activity, unintended pregnancy, mood changes, etc.

What is alcohol poisoning?

Alcohol poisoning is a severe and life-threatening reaction to drinking a large amount of alcohol at one time.

What are symptoms of alcohol poisoning?

Symptoms of alcohol poisoning include mental confusion, passing out and not waking up, seizures, slow breathing (fewer than 8 breaths per minute) or irregular breathing (10 seconds or more between breaths), severe vomiting (may happen even when sleeping), and cold, clammy or blue skin.

Alcohol poisoning can cause the brain to shut down, breathing to stop, choking on his/her own vomit, or can cause coma or death.

If someone has been drinking and shows any signs of alcohol poisoning, call 911 immediately. It is a medical emergency.

What are the consequences of underage drinking?

Youth who drink alcohol are more likely to experience:

- Social problems, such as higher absence, poor/failing grades, fighting and lack of participation in youth activities
- Legal problems, such as arrest for driving or physically hurting someone while drunk
- Physical problems, such as hangovers or illnesses
- Unwanted, unplanned, and unprotected sexual activity
- Physical and sexual assault, including date and acquaintance rape
- Disruption of normal growth and sexual development
- Alcohol-related car crashes and other unintentional injuries, such as burns, falls and drowning
- Changes in brain development that may have life-long effects
- High risk for suicide and homicide
- Memory problems
- Death from alcohol poisoning
- Abuse of other drugs

The risk of youth experiencing these problems is greater for those who binge drink than for those who do not binge drink. Youth who start drinking before age 15 are five times more likely to develop alcohol dependence.

What can parents do?

- Supervise their child's activities, know who their friends are and monitor their surroundings
- Securely lock up alcohol
- Do not buy or supply alcohol for minors
- Watch for signs of alcohol use (smell of alcohol, illnesses, hangovers, poor grades, accidents, etc.)
- Do not let an underage person drive if they have been drinking

Resources:

[Oakland County Health Division/Office of Substance Abuse Services \(OCHD/OSAS\)](http://www.oakgov.com/health/program_services/sas_about.html)

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248-858-5200

[PACE Program \(Prior Authorization and Central Evaluation Program\)](#)

PACE is the first step to substance abuse treatment services for income eligible residents in Oakland County. 248-858-5200 or 888-350-0900, ext. 85200

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Alcoholics Anonymous 248-332-3521

Alanon 248-706-1020

Narcotics Anonymous 248-543-7200

Program and Prevention Information 248-858-0001

Treatment Information PACE 1-888-350-0900, ext. 85200



NURSE ON CALL PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION HOTLINE
800.848.5533 NOC@OAKGOV.COM
OAKGOV.COM/HEALTH



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