

# Alcohol and Teenagers **DON'T MIX**

TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT THE DANGERS OF DRINKING

Alcohol is a dangerous drug for underage drinkers. Statistics show that kids who drink are more likely to be involved in alcohol-related traffic accidents, have serious problems at school, and be victims of violence, including date rape. Facts and figures about these risks may or may not influence your child to avoid alcohol.

## THE ADOLESCENT BRAIN AND ALCOHOL

A teenager's brain is still maturing and continues to mature into the early 20s. Until that time, teens are more likely to make poor decisions, act on impulse, and ignore negative consequences of their behavior. Just being told about the harm of using alcohol may not keep them from drinking.

### Action Step

Chances are when you bring up the subject of alcohol (or drugs or sex), your teen may run for the hills. Be prepared for what you want to say and how you want to say it. Listen carefully without interrupting.

## ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

- Be a good role model. If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation.
- Show your child ways to deal with stress that do not involve alcohol. Exercise, meditate, or enjoy a hobby.
- Set "no alcohol" rules for your child and anyone under age 21 in your home. Make your expectations clear about no alcohol use outside of the home. Stick to the consequences for breaking rules.
- Make it clear to your child that he or she should not drive or be in the car with a driver who has been drinking. Set up open communication so your child feels comfortable being honest with you.
- Spend one-on-one time with your child so he or she knows that you care.
- Praise your child often to show that you notice and appreciate his or her efforts. Avoid teasing or criticism.
- Help your child learn to be assertive in saying "no" to alcohol. The website [www.thecoolspot.gov](http://www.thecoolspot.gov) can help your child do this, too.

