

Talking with your child about alcohol

Useful contacts

4Real
(Under 18s Drug & Alcohol Service)
Green Lane,
Spennymoor,
DL15 6JQ
☎03000 267567

Community Alcohol Service
(Over 18s Alcohol Service)
William Robson House
Moody's Yard
Claypath
Durham
DH1 1SA
☎0191 386 6555
Fax: 0191 384 5749

Police
In an emergency dial 999
In a non emergency dial 101

Useful websites

Balance
www.balancenortheast.co.uk

4Real
www.4realcountydurham.co.uk

Frank
www.talktofrank.com

With thanks to the Parents Group from Sunnybrow Primary School, County Durham for their contribution to the development of this booklet.

Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format.

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community.safety@durham.gov.uk
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CAS11563 Children and Adults Services, CMI Team 2014

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Talking with your child about alcohol Information booklet



www.durham.gov.uk/alcohol

Talking with your child about alcohol

This guide is designed to support you as a parent or carer to deal with the questions you and your children may have about alcohol.

Talking with your child about alcohol before they start drinking is important. Balance (The North East of England's Alcohol Office) suggests you do this before they go to secondary school.

Take advantage of everyday opportunities like riding in the car, walking to the shops or eating dinner to begin the conversation.

It can be difficult to know what to say to your child on alcohol. Well how about starting with the facts found in this leaflet and dispel any myths they may have about drinking alcohol. Try putting the facts in your own words so they sound more natural.

Be honest about what you tell them and ask your son or daughter questions about their beliefs about alcohol and listen to what they have to say.

Discuss how they can deal with any pressure they get from their friends to drink (there are a few suggestions on page 6) and how to avoid taking unnecessary risks and stay safe. Despite alcohol being pictured as an important part of life most children in County Durham are choosing not to drink alcohol at all.*

*Children and Young People's Survey 2012

You and your drinking

Be a good role model by not being drunk or suffering from the effects of alcohol in front of your children and sticking to the recommended daily limits for lower risk drinking. The adult guidelines for alcohol state that men shouldn't regularly drink more than 3 to 4 units per day and women shouldn't regularly drink more than 2 to 3 units per day. Children often copy what their parents do and how they act. Parents and carers often underestimate just how much influence they have on their own children.

It is important to talk to your child about why you drink alcohol (if you do). Discuss how alcohol can make you feel – including when you've had too much, how it can change your behaviour and make you do things you wouldn't normally do.

Alcohol and children the key facts

- Giving alcohol to your child from an early age does not turn them into a responsible drinker as an adult. In fact, the earlier a child is introduced to alcohol the more likely they are to have an alcohol problem later in life.
- The human brain takes until the age of 25 to fully develop and alcohol can slow down brain development and have a long term impact on memory, reactions and attention span.
- Young people will be less able to consent to sex or sexual touching if they drink alcohol. They are also more likely to have unprotected sex.
- Children who drink alcohol are more likely to be behind at school or play truant.
- Underage drinking increases the chance of longer term problems with alcohol misuse.
- Even though there are recommended daily guidelines for adult drinkers, there are NO guidelines for safe alcohol consumption for children (under 18s). That is because their bodies are still developing and alcohol affects them more than adults.





Myth busters

Myth: The majority of children drink alcohol.

Wrong: The truth is fewer children are drinking alcohol. However, those who do drink are drinking too much too often.

Myth: Most parents give their child alcohol.

Wrong: The truth is seven out of ten parents in the North East have never given their child alcohol.

Myth: If you drink regularly your body develops a tolerance to alcohol and you can drink a lot more.

Wrong: The truth is the more you drink the more damage you do to your body and the risks become greater. If you think you can tolerate more alcohol it is a warning that your body has started to be affected by it.

Myth: Alcopops are ok for children to drink.

Wrong: The truth is Alcopops contain the same amount of alcohol as a glass of wine or a measure of spirit.

Alcohol, your child and the consequences, parents frequently asked questions

What if my child is found drunk?

If the police find your child drunk, they will decide whether your child needs medical attention. If so, an ambulance will be called and the police will telephone you to let you know. If medical attention is not required the police will return your child home to you.

The police will tell you that that a referral has been made to 4Real the County Durham Young Persons' Drug and Alcohol Service. Depending on the circumstances the Safeguarding Team within Durham Constabulary may also be informed.

What are the potential consequences for my child?

Alcohol changes the way people behave and the decisions they make. Children might do things when they have had a drink of alcohol that they normally wouldn't do.

Drinking alcohol can increase the risk of children becoming a victim of crime or committing a crime.

Some children who have drunk alcohol have ended up in trouble with the police. Your child could get a criminal record which would make it harder to get a job when they are older. It can also affect them if they are going abroad because some countries may refuse entry to people with a criminal record.

Mobile phones can be used to capture embarrassing and inappropriate pictures and videos which can then be shared with others via social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter. This can be a painful and lasting reminder of a child's behaviour when they were drunk.



What if my child goes to someone else's house and is given alcohol by another adult?

It is important that your family and friends know what your wishes are where alcohol and your child is concerned. Before your child attends a party or other occasion where you will not be, talk to the other adults who will be around so they know your views on under-age drinking.



Alcohol – what is the law?

It is a criminal offence for a person under the age of 18 being found in persistent possession of alcohol. If they are found in possession of alcohol three or more times in 12 months they may be taken to court and receive a fine of up to £500 and therefore have a criminal conviction.

The police, PCSOs and wardens have the power to seize/confiscate any alcohol from young people in public spaces.

It is a criminal offence if you sell alcohol to or buy alcohol for a person under 18. You can receive a fine of up to £5,000.

If an over 18 is found drinking alcohol where there are under 18's and it is believed that the alcohol will be passed to an under 18 then any alcohol may be seized.



How can my child deal with peer pressure to drink alcohol?

It is not always easy to say no to alcohol when many of their friends are drinking. Discuss this with your child and agree some tactics that they can use, for example:

- I've got a big match tomorrow (or another sporting event)
- I'm in training for....
- I'm not drinking as I'm going to look after you to make sure you're ok
- I'm on antibiotics
- I've got to be up early in the morning

Tell them that if they are in an uncomfortable situation involving alcohol they can always call you to get picked up.

