Parents, Young People & Alcohol Campaign
COMMUNITY ACTION KIT
BACKGROUND

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT
This toolkit provides health professionals and community groups with some strategies about what can be done locally to decrease alcohol-related harm among young people aged 12 to 17 years. These strategies have been developed to support parents in reducing their children’s exposure to alcohol.

This toolkit supports the key messages of the ‘Parents, Young People and Alcohol’ campaign, which forms part of the Alcohol.Think Again program.

ABOUT THE MESSAGE
This is the second phase of the Alcohol.Think Again Parents, Young People and Alcohol Campaign. This phase of the campaign will expand on the original message that: ‘No Alcohol for Under 18s is the Safest Choice’ with the positioning statement, ‘We all want to see our children reach their full potential. That’s why no one should supply alcohol to under 18s’.

The campaign will endeavour to increase parents’ awareness of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Alcohol Guideline to reduce alcohol-related harms for young people under 18 years of age. The guideline is:

**NHMRC ALCOHOL GUIDELINE 3 – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE**

For children and young people under 18 years of age, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.

- Parents and carers should be advised that children under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking and that for this age group, not drinking alcohol is especially important.

- For young people aged 15 to 17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible.

The campaign is a collaborative initiative between the Drug and Alcohol Office (DAO) and the McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth (MCAAY).
THE CAMPAIGN TARGET GROUP

Primary target groups

- Parents and carers of 12 to 17 year olds.
- People in the Western Australian community who may be in a position to influence young people.

Secondary target group

- Young people aged 12 to 17 years.

Note – The evidence suggests that the most effective means of changing the drinking behaviours of young people is through a shift in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of those making decisions around young people’s alcohol use e.g. broader community 25 years and over.

THE CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVE

To increase the knowledge of parents and other community members about the reasons why children and other young people should delay alcohol use until at least 18 years of age and the importance of personal and community action to delay young people’s alcohol use.

THE CAMPAIGN MEDIA CHANNELS

The campaign features a range of media channels including:

- State-wide television advertising.
- Press and cinema advertising.
- Online advertising e.g. YouTube.

We encourage you to implement localised strategies throughout the year during and outside periods of campaign advertising.

PARENTS, YOUNG PEOPLE & ALCOHOL CAMPAIGN – 2014/15 TENTATIVE MEDIA SCHEDULE

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<th>JULY</th>
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TAKING ACTION

WHAT CAN YOU DO LOCALLY

There are a number of activities that you can undertake locally to help reduce alcohol-related harm among young people in your community. These can include:

- Sending out media releases to your local community newspaper to increase awareness and promote the campaign message.
- Organise local events to educate parents and young people.
- Promote the campaign message through your organisation’s website and/or Facebook page.
- Promote the campaign message to schools via school and P&C/P&F websites and newsletters.
- Contact your local radio station to promote the campaign message to the wider community via radio interviews or community announcements.

This toolkit provides a range of resources that are designed as a starting point to be adapted for implementing the campaign message locally.

WHAT IS IN THIS TOOLKIT

- Calendar of events to align various strategies for parents and community members with common celebration times for young people.
- An Infographic with important statistics and information about alcohol and young people which can be used through a variety of media channels.
- A flyer for parents which provides tips to support decisions around their child’s alcohol use.
- A suite of static images for use in digital media to promote the message and encourage parents to seek more information.
- An email signature insert displaying the campaign message.
- A campaign poster to promote the Parents, Young People and Alcohol campaign.
- A media release template with supporting facts.
- Frequently asked questions which can be used through various media channels such as local newspapers, local radio interviews or talk-back radio.
- A ‘Myths and Facts’ sheet which provides useful information that can be submitted to local media, community groups or put on your organisation’s website/social media pages.

As a local stakeholder you may wish to use one or all of the supplied templates and strategies. You are in the best position to determine which activities work best for you and we are happy to offer assistance and support as requested.

If you need support or wish to adapt any of the resources included in this toolkit, please contact the Community Programs team at the Drug and Alcohol Office.
Phone: (08) 9370 0333
It can be useful to know when certain events and celebrations involving young people are occurring, to help plan possible strategies to support parents talking to their children about the effect alcohol has on the developing brain, their expectations about alcohol and what parents can do to keep their child safe. This calendar highlights some common times of the year where celebrations and festivities may take place which can create environments and situations where alcohol is present, and potentially consumed by young people.

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<th>JAN</th>
<th>NEW YEARS, AUSTRALIA DAY</th>
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<td>FEB</td>
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<td>SCHOOL BALLS, TERM 1 BREAK</td>
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<td>NOV</td>
<td>LEAVERS CELEBRATIONS</td>
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<td>DEC</td>
<td>TERM 4 BREAK, CHRISTMAS</td>
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CAMPAIGN MATERIALS

WHAT’S AVAILABLE

- A new infographic for print and digital media.
- A flyer which provides tips for parents.
- A suite of Alcohol.Think Again campaign images for use in digital media.
- An email signature insert displaying the campaign message.
- Campaign poster.

If you need support, or wish to adapt any of the resources to suit your community, please contact the Community Programs team at the Drug and Alcohol Office.

Phone: (08) 9370 0333
INFOGRAPHIC
This infographic can be used within the community to highlight important statistics and information about alcohol and young people. This content can be used in a variety of ways including:

- Within school and P&C/P&F websites and newsletters.
- Published in community newspapers.
- Displayed on community notice boards and within youth centres.
- Community radio announcements.

Alcohol and Young People (12-17yrs)

In WA, fewer young people are choosing to drink alcohol.

However, of those who drank in the last week, more are drinking at harmful levels.

Research shows that approximately:

1 in 4 young people had never tried alcohol.

1 in 6 drank alcohol in the last week.

Of those who drank in the last week:

1 in 3 drank at levels considered harmful for adults.

The average amount consumed was 6.5 standard drinks.

They got their alcohol from:

- 28% Parents
- 26% Friends
- 23% Someone else bought it for them

Drinking alcohol from a young age increases the risk of health problems.

- Memory problems
- Learning difficulties
- Lack of concentration
- Academic failure
- Problems with family and friends
- Risky sexual behaviour
- Physical injury
- Increased risk-taking anti-social behaviour
- Poor mental health
- Depression
- Self-harm
- Suicide

For under 18s, NO alcohol is the safest choice

Of those who drank in the last week, behaviours* after drinking included:

- 40% Vomiting
- 27% Arguing
- 13% Hitting someone or having a fight

We all want to see our children reach their potential.

That's why no one should supply alcohol to under 18s.

*behaviours that occurred in the last year.
This flyer provides parents with tips to support their decisions around their child’s alcohol use.

**Alcohol and Young People: Tips for parents of 12-17 year olds**

Evidence tells us that what you do as a parent affects your child’s choices about alcohol.

**What can parents do?**

1. **Avoid providing alcohol to your children**
   - Drinking from an early age can lead to:
     - Young people drinking more regularly and in greater quantities.
     - Increased likelihood of alcohol-related problems later in life.
   - Children who are supplied alcohol by their parents for use without parental supervision are four times more likely to drink in a harmful way.

2. **Educate your child**
   - Inform them of the harms associated with drinking alcohol. These include:
     - Harm to the developing brain that can lead to memory problems and learning difficulties.
     - Blackouts.
     - Physical injury.
     - Violence.
     - Risky sexual behaviour.

3. **Clarify your expectations**
   - Talk to your child about your expectations of them regarding alcohol use.
     - If your expectation is no alcohol, explain why.
     - Discuss how you expect them to behave in environments where alcohol is present.
     - If they attend a social event be sure your child understands that they need to keep in touch with you about where they are, and remind them of your expectations about alcohol.
     - Reach an agreement based upon your expectations about alcohol and what will happen if the agreement isn’t kept.

4. **Talk with other parents**
   - Talk to other parents and let them know that you do not want them to provide alcohol to your child under any circumstances.

To help our children reach their full potential, **no one should supply alcohol to under 18s.**

For more information go to: alcoholthinkagain.com.au
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CAMPAIGN IMAGES
The below images are available for use in the following ways:

- On organisation websites and newsletters.
- Within school and P&C/P&F websites and newsletters.
- Used in community newspapers.
- Displayed on community notice boards.

For under 18s, NO alcohol is the safest choice.

To help children reach their full potential, no one should supply alcohol to under 18s.

Alcohol contributes to young people making poor decisions.

Alcohol affects the developing brain.

Talk to your child about your expectations regarding alcohol.
The files for the above images will be sent to all Community Action Kit recipients for use in digital media. If any other formats are required please contact the Community Programs team at the Drug and Alcohol Office.

Phone: (08) 9370 0333
EMAIL SIGNATURE INSERT

This image is designed to be inserted below your email signature.

HOW TO INSERT IMAGE INTO A MICROSOFT OUTLOOK EMAIL SIGNATURE. If you do not use Microsoft Outlook as your email provider, please see your IT department/staff for assistance.

1. Open a new message.
2. Select ‘Signatures’ under the ‘Message’ tab (in the ‘Include’ area on the toolbar).
3. From the drop down menu select ‘Signatures’.
4. ‘COPY’ the below image and ‘PASTE’ it into the desired section of your signature.
5. Click ‘OK’.

The files for the email signature insert will be sent to all Community Action Kit recipients. If any other formats are required please contact the Community Programs team at the Drug and Alcohol Office.

Phone: (08) 9370 0333
CAMPAIGN POSTER
This poster is available to promote the Alcohol.Think Again campaign. It can be displayed in a variety of locations including schools, shopping centres, community centres, sporting complexes etc.

I see the harm alcohol does to young people.

No one should supply alcohol to under 18s.
Visit alcoholthinkagain.com.au

Dr. Gervase Chaney
Princess Margaret Hospital for Children
**KEY MEDIA MESSAGES – PARENTS, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ALCOHOL CAMPAIGN**

The following key media messages have been designed to be adapted for your local community. While the campaign’s state-wide television, cinema, press and online advertisements will appear at various times throughout the year (see *Campaign Strategies* section), you may choose to use the key messages to support your own local strategies at other times.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY MEDIA MESSAGES</th>
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<tr>
<td>• We all want to see our children reach their full potential. No one should supply alcohol to under 18s.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• A new state-wide <em>Alcohol. Think Again</em> campaign was launched on 05/11/2014 and is about preventing and reducing alcohol-related harms among young people, including:</td>
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<td>• Physical injury.</td>
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<td>• Violence.</td>
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<td>• Academic failure.</td>
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<td>• Risky sexual behaviour.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• There is increasing evidence about the negative effect alcohol has on the developing brain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The safest choice for under 18s is not to drink alcohol at all, according to National Health and Medical Research Council Alcohol Guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some parents may believe they are no longer able to influence their child’s behaviour and the choices they make about using alcohol. The evidence tells us that what parents do, how they communicate their expectations to their children and whether they supply alcohol does influence their children’s choices.</td>
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### KEY MEDIA MESSAGES

- Research shows that parents are one of the key influencers in whether their child drinks alcohol. Many young people chose not to drink to avoid losing their parent’s trust.

- It is important for parents to know where their child is, who they are with and what they are doing. Research shows that poorly supervised teenagers are more likely to begin drinking at a younger age, tend to drink more and are more likely to develop harmful drinking patterns.

- Many parents believe they should teach their child how to drink alcohol responsibly. There is little evidence to support this belief. Alarmingly, research has shown that if parents are supportive of their child drinking, these young people are likely to drink more frequently. When parents supply alcohol to their child, to drink without parental supervision, they were four times more likely to drink in a harmful way.

- For more information on the Parent’s, Young People and Alcohol campaign visit [alcoholthinkagain.com.au](http://alcoholthinkagain.com.au)

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If you need support, or wish to adapt any of these key media messages to suit your community, please contact the Community Programs team at the Drug and Alcohol Office.

Phone: (08) 9370 0333
MEDIA RELEASE TIPS

- The following media release has been designed to be adapted for your local community.

- Once you have adapted the media release to suit your community you can send it to various community newspapers for possible publication. You can also include the associated supporting facts (p16) for additional publishable material.

- While the campaign’s state-wide television, cinema, press and online advertisements will appear at various times throughout the year (see ‘Campaign Media Channels’ section), you may choose to use the media release to support your own local strategies any time of the year.

- Talk to the Community Programs team at the Drug and Alcohol Office to find out if there are local statistics available that can be used to make your media release more specific to your community or region. Phone: (08) 9370 0333.
MEDIA RELEASE – ALCOHOL AND YOUNG PEOPLE

[DATE]

The (INSERT ORGANISATION NAME) is striving to raise awareness in (INSERT COMMUNITY NAME) of the harms that can occur when young people consume alcohol.

(INSERT REPRESENTATIVE NAME) from (INSERT ORGANISATION NAME) said the National Health and Medical Research Council Alcohol Guidelines recommend for young people under 18 years of age, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.

“In a recent survey, 17.5% of 12 to 17 year old Western Australian students reported that they had drunk alcohol in the last week,” (INSERT REPRESENTATIVE NAME) said.

“More than one third of the students who reported drinking in the last week drank at levels that would be harmful for adults, let alone a young person.”

“Evidence shows that alcohol consumed by young people under 18 years of age can be harmful to the developing brain. It can result in learning difficulties, memory problems, mental health issues and other problems later in life such as alcohol dependence.”

(INSERT REPRESENTATIVE NAME) said the relationship young people have with alcohol is strongly influenced by Australia’s culture which normalises alcohol use, creating a relaxed attitude towards alcohol and the view that it is not harmful.

“Seeing alcohol as not harmful can encourage young people to drink at an earlier age and to aspire to be part of the general drinking culture they see around them, which includes harmful drinking” (INSERT REPRESENTATIVE NAME) said.

“We all want to see our children reach their potential. That’s why no one should supply alcohol to under 18s”. For more information on alcohol and young people visit www.alcoholthinkagain.com.au

ENDS

Media contact: (INSERT NAME, ORGANISATION AND PHONE NUMBER HERE)
MEDIA RELEASE – SUPPORTING FACTS

- The NHMRC Guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol recommend for young people under 18 years of age, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.
  - Parents and carers should be advised that children under 18 years of age are at greatest risk of harm from drinking and that for this age group, not drinking is especially important.
  - For 15 to 17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible.

This guideline is based on evidence showing that the risks of accidents, injuries, violence and self-harm are high among drinkers under 18 years of age.

- Drinkers under 15 years of age are much more likely than older drinkers to experience risky or antisocial behaviour connected with their drinking, with the rates also elevated among drinkers aged 15 to 17 years.

- The evidence suggests that earlier initiation of drinking is related to more frequent and higher quantity of alcohol consumption in adolescence, and these patterns are in turn related to the development of alcohol-related harms in adolescence and adulthood.

- There is increasing evidence that alcohol may adversely affect brain development and lead to alcohol-related problems in later life.

  **Short-term harms** can include:
  - Impairment of abilities (impaired vision, slow response time, impaired thinking, inability to concentrate and poor coordination).
  - Increased risk taking.
  - Mood changes.
  - Blackouts with no memory of what has happened.

  **Long-term harms** can include:
  - A decrease in memory ability.
  - Lack of problem solving skills.
  - Decreased visual and spatial skills.
  - Health problems later in life (cancer, liver disease, heart disease, stroke, dependence and mental health problems).

- The 2011 Australian School Students Alcohol and Drug survey of 12 to 17 year old students in Western Australia found:
  - 29.7% drank in the last month and 17.5% in the last week.
  - The proportion of non-drinkers was significantly higher in 2011 (23.9%) compared to 2008 (15.9%).
  - Of those who drank in the last week (17.5%), more than one-third (36.2%) of 12 to 17 year olds drank at harmful levels.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The answers to the following frequently asked questions can be used to promote the campaign message in an interview with your local radio station, as quotes in newspapers, discussions with work groups and presentations, and service clubs etc.

What are the Guidelines for young people and alcohol?

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recommend the following guidelines to reduce alcohol-related health harms for young people under 18 years of age.

- **GUIDELINE 3A - REDUCE RISK TO THOSE UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE**
  Parents and carers should be advised that children under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking and that for this age group, not drinking alcohol is especially important.

- **GUIDELINE 3B - REDUCE RISK TO THOSE UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE**
  For young people aged 15 to 17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible.

Why have these alcohol guidelines for young people been introduced?

The guidelines provide guidance for parents and carers, as well as for young people themselves, about the safest option to prevent alcohol-related harm for children and young people up to 18 years of age.

It is based on an assessment of the potential harms of alcohol for this age group, as well as the evidence that alcohol may adversely affect brain development and be linked to alcohol-related problems later in life.

It is also based on evidence showing that:

- The risk of accidents, injuries, violence and self-harm are high among drinkers aged under 18 years.
- Drinkers under 15 years of age are much more likely than older drinkers to experience risky or antisocial behaviour connected with their drinking, with the rates also somewhat raised among drinkers aged 15 to 17 years.
- Early initiation of drinking is associated with a higher frequency and quantity of alcohol consumption. These contribute to the development of alcohol-related harms in adolescence and adulthood.
What are the short and long-term harms of alcohol for young people?

There is growing evidence that drinking alcohol is harmful to the developing brain, particularly to the area of the brain that is responsible for rational thinking. Damage to this part of the brain during its development can lead to learning difficulties, memory problems, and the risk of mental health problems. There may be an association with other problems later in life such as alcohol dependence.

The **short-term** harms can include:

- **Impairment of abilities** (impaired vision, slow response time, impaired thinking, inability to concentrate and poor coordination).
- **Increased risk-taking** (may make decisions without thinking about consequences).

The **long-term** harms can include:

- **A decrease in memory ability.**
- **Lack of problem solving skills.**
- **Decreased visual and spatial skills.**
- **Health problems later in life** (cancer, liver disease, heart disease, stroke, dependence and mental health problems).
What harmful behaviours can occur when young people drink alcohol?

When young people drink alcohol, the way they drink, the culture that supports their drinking and how much they drink, increases the likelihood of them experiencing alcohol-related harm.

The 2011 Australian School Student Alcohol and Drug Survey found of students who drank in the last week (17.5%), more than one-third (36.2%) drank at harmful levels for single-occasion alcohol-related harm.

Harmful behaviours can include:

**Increased risk of accidental and violent injury.**
- The occurrence of risk-taking behaviours increases in adolescence and the possibility of injury increases even more when alcohol is also involved.
- Alcohol consumption in young adults is associated with physical injury, risky sexual behaviour, adverse behavioural patterns and academic failure.
- Adolescents are also more likely to be involved in a fight when they drink alcohol; compared to if they were sober.

**Mental health problems including depression, self-harm and suicide.**
- Alcohol use increases the risk for a range of mental health and social problems in young adults.
- The nature of the relationship between alcohol use and mental health in adolescence is somewhat reciprocal.
- Young people with poor mental health are more likely to initiate alcohol use in adolescence, and report drinking frequently. They are also more likely to drink with the intent to get drunk. Alcohol use, in turn, may also contribute to poor mental health.
- Adolescents who use drinking as a method of coping are more likely to suffer from depression, and can bring on heavy drinking, which is itself predictive of suicidal behavior.
What are the impacts of alcohol on the developing brain?

There is growing evidence that drinking alcohol is harmful to the developing brain. Two areas of the brain that may be particularly vulnerable to the effects of alcohol consumption during the teenage years are:

1. **The hippocampus** – is responsible for memory and learning.
2. **Prefrontal lobe** – is important for planning, judgement, decision making, impulse control and language.

Damage to these parts of the brain during its development can result in irreversible brain changes that can impact decision making, personality, memory and learning.

While research tells us alcohol can damage the developing brain it is not clear how much alcohol it takes to do this. For these reasons, it is recommended that **for under 18s no alcohol is the safest choice and that they delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible.**
How can parents influence the behaviour and choices that their teenagers make about using alcohol?

Parents may believe they no longer influence their teen’s behaviour and the choices they make about using alcohol. The evidence tells us that what parents do, how they communicate their expectations to their children and whether they supply alcohol does influence their children’s choices.

Avoid providing alcohol to your children.
- It is within your control not to supply alcohol for your child to consume within the home or in other settings, even if you are feeling pressured by your child or other parents. The NHMRC alcohol guidelines provide a clear message that for under 18s, no alcohol is the safest choice.

Advise other parents about your expectations for your child about alcohol.
- Talk to other parents and let them know that you do not want them to provide alcohol to your child under any circumstances. This is especially relevant when teenagers are going to friends’ houses for parties.

Be aware of places and situations where your child may be exposed to people drinking alcohol.
- Research shows that teenagers who are poorly supervised begin drinking at an earlier age, tend to drink more and are more likely to develop harmful drinking patterns.
- Be sure that your child understands that they need to keep in touch with you about where they are, and to seek your permission to be there. Also reach an agreement on what time they need to come home and what will happen if they break the rules.

Discuss alcohol with your child from an early age and explain your expectations about alcohol.
- If possible, start conversations about alcohol early in your child’s life. This sets you up for easier discussions during teenage years and means they should already be aware of what your attitudes and expectations are about alcohol. This also builds respect and good communication which will help you work through more specific issues as they grow older.
- Talk about the way alcohol is portrayed in the media. Point out alcohol advertising and ask your child who they think the ad is aimed at? Ask them what parts of the ad made them think it was aimed at the group they identified.
- Help them to think about the context the product (alcohol) is being portrayed in, and how this might make it appealing or desirable to them, or a particular age group.
- Explain the evidence about the harmful effects of alcohol on the body, particularly the effects on the developing brain.
- Discuss how other people’s drinking might affect them and help them to develop responses, such as how to cope with pressure to drink, how to defuse aggression and how to avoid getting in a car with someone who is drunk.
If you need support in delivering these messages and/or require information more specific to your community and location please contact the **Community Programs team at the Drug and Alcohol Office.**

**Phone:** (08) 9370 0333

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**Where to go for more information.**

More information can be found at:

- **The Alcohol.Think Again website**  
  Website: [alcoholthinkagain.com.au](http://alcoholthinkagain.com.au)

- **The Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)** - Information, counselling and advice for people concerned about their own or another’s alcohol use. This is a 24-hour, state-wide, confidential telephone service.  
  PHONE: (08) 9442 5000 (or toll-free for country callers on 1800 198 024)  
  EMAIL: [adis@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:adis@health.wa.gov.au)

- **The Parents and Drug Information Service (PDIS)** - Confidential telephone support, counselling, information and referral service for parents.  
  PHONE: (08) 9442 5050 (or toll-free for country callers on 1800 653 203)  
  EMAIL: [pdis@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:pdis@health.wa.gov.au)
There are many myths and misconceptions regarding young people and alcohol. This factsheet provides some factual information on debunking myths or beliefs about young people and alcohol commonly held by the community.

The below myths and facts can be used in a variety of ways, including:

- On school and P&C/P&F websites and newsletters.
- Published in the local newspapers.
- As speaking points for radio presenters or in radio interviews.
- On your organisation’s website and newsletter.

**MYTH:** Introducing my child to alcohol and letting them drink at home will teach them how to drink responsibly, like they do in some European countries.

**FACT**
There is no evidence that supports the introduction of alcohol to children and adolescents being helpful in building responsible drinking behaviours.

However, there is strong evidence to support parents in holding off their child’s alcohol use for as long as possible. Young people who start drinking early are more likely to become regular drinkers and are at greater risk of developing alcohol-related physical and mental health problems later on.

Some European countries including France, Italy and Spain have much higher rates of alcohol-related harm than in Australia. This includes the rate of alcohol-related falls, injuries, road traffic casualties, liver cirrhosis and mouth and oropharynx cancers.

**MYTH:** It’s better if I supply my child with alcohol rather than them getting it from someone else.

**FACT**
Some parents provide their teenagers with alcohol thinking that it will control the amount they consume.

There is little evidence to support this belief. Research has shown that if parents are supportive of their child drinking, these young people are likely to drink more frequently. When parents supply alcohol to their child, to drink without parental supervision, they were four times more likely to drink in a harmful way.

Ease of obtaining alcohol is an important factor in influencing young people’s drinking. When parents provide alcohol to their children, they make it very easy for young people to access alcohol. Research shows when restrictions are placed on availability, alcohol and associated problems decrease.
MYTH: Most parents give their children alcohol. I want to help my teenager fit in, so I don’t want them to be the only one at a party who is not drinking.

FACT
Some parents may think it is best to introduce their child to small amounts of alcohol so that by the time they turn 18, they have learnt some drinking skills. There’s no evidence to support this idea, and indeed there is emerging evidence that early parental supply of alcohol is associated with increased risks.

There is increasing evidence about the effect alcohol has on the developing brain and this knowledge provides parents with the opportunity to help their children to reach their full potential.

Sometimes parents may feel pressure - from their children or other parents - to provide alcohol to young people. If you decide to delay your child’s alcohol use, you will not be alone, as many other parents have made the same decision.

Talking openly with other parents about the importance of delaying young people’s alcohol use will help to raise awareness and stimulate important discussions. You may be surprised how many other parents feel the same way.

Parents can provide their child with information about the effects of alcohol on the developing brain and support them to not use alcohol for as long as possible, particularly before they turn 18.

A relaxed attitude to alcohol and the view that alcohol is not harmful can lead to young people drinking at an earlier age to be part of the drinking culture they see around them, which often includes harmful alcohol consumption.

MYTH: The short-term harms of drinking alcohol are more of a concern for my child than the long-term harms.

FACT
Harmful drinking behaviour can have both short-term and long-term impacts, which is why it is important to change community attitudes about alcohol.

Often short-term harms are seen as the main areas for concern. However, long-term harms are just as important to address in relation to young people’s alcohol consumption.

- **Short-term harms can include:**
  - General impairment of ability.
  - Increased risk taking.
  - Mood changes.

- **Long-term drinking can result in:**
  - A decrease in memory ability.
  - Lack of problem solving skills.
  - Decreased visual and spatial skills.
  - Health problems later in life (cancer, liver disease, heart disease, stroke, dependence and mental health problems).

The hippocampus is responsible for memory and learning. Studies of adolescents show that heavy alcohol use is associated with reduced size of the hippocampus and decreased memory skills.
MYTH: Alcohol isn’t as much of a worry as cannabis or other drugs.

FACT
Both alcohol and cannabis are drugs and can cause both short and long-term harm.

Alcohol is also heavily promoted and available at low cost in forms that are highly appealing to young people.

In Western Australia there is a greater proportion of young people who drink alcohol compared to those that use cannabis or other drugs. Research conducted with Western Australian students aged 12 to 17 years reported:

- Over half (53.3%) drank alcohol in the past year and 29.7% drank in the past month.
- The use of any illicit drugs were much lower with 16.3% using in the past year and 9.5% in the past month.
- Cannabis use was also lower with 15.4% using in the past year and 8.5% in the past month.

This research also showed that of the Western Australian students aged 12 to 17 who drank in the last week (17.5%), more than one-third (36.2%) drank at the risk for single occasion alcohol-related harm defined for adults.

The amount of harm attributable to alcohol is greater than any of the illicit drugs.

MYTH: My teenagers are going to start drinking sooner or later. I may as well let them drink at home now while they are supervised.

FACT
There is no evidence to support parents introducing young people to alcohol in the home as a method of teaching responsible drinking.

In fact, starting drinking at an early age has been shown to increase the likelihood of alcohol-related problems later in life, as well as more regular consumption of alcohol and in greater quantities.

- The good news is that the number of young people who don’t drink has increased. However, those who do drink are drinking at more harmful levels.
- There is strong evidence to support parents in delaying their child’s alcohol use for as long as possible.
- The longer young people delay drinking, the less likely they are to develop problems with alcohol later on in life.
USEFUL LINKS

Drug and Alcohol Office
7 Field Street
Mount Lawley WA 6050
Telephone: (08) 9370 0333
Fax: (08) 9272 6605
Website: dao.health.wa.gov.au

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)
Information, counselling and advice for people concerned about their own or another’s alcohol use. This is a 24-hour, state-wide, confidential telephone service.
Telephone: (08) 9442 5000
Toll free (country callers only): 1800 198 024
Email: adis@health.wa.gov.au

Parent Drug Information Service (PDIS)
Confidential telephone support, counselling, information and referral service for parents.
Telephone: (08) 9442 5050
Toll free: 1800 653 203
Email: pdis@health.wa.gov.au
We would really appreciate your feedback!

To enable us to continue to provide support kits with information that is of use to you, Community Programs will send you a short online survey to complete 3 months after receiving this kit. If you have any feedback or suggestions for future support kits please let us know!