

FACT SHEET: The Dangers of Binge Drinking

What is binge drinking?

Binge drinking is the consumption of five or more alcoholic drinks in a row on at least one occasion. Although binge drinking can be dangerous at any age, it is a special problem among teens and young adults. In a national survey, about a third of high school seniors and 42% of college students reported at least one occasion of binge drinking within the previous two weeks.

Why is binge drinking so dangerous?

Binge drinking is harmful because of the potential consequences. People who binge on a regular basis are at an even higher risk for negative consequences. Since young people frequently combine high risk activities with binge drinking, their potential for death or serious injury is very high. Some of the dangers include:

- ✓ Death or injury due to falls, fires, drowning, or a drunk driving crash.
- ✓ Pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases due to unintended sexual activity.
- ✓ Being the victim or perpetrator of date rape or other assault.
- ✓ Death from alcohol poisoning.

What is alcohol poisoning?

Alcohol is actually a depressant drug. When a large amount is consumed in a short period of time, the body cannot process it quickly enough, resulting in a high blood alcohol content (BAC). Most people know that a BAC of more than .10% is legally drunk, but very high concentrations can result in more than just legal problems. A very high BAC can cause central nervous system depression, loss of consciousness, respiratory arrest, and death. Many victims die because they begin to throw up while they are unconscious and then choke to death on their own vomit.

What can be done to prevent binge drinking and its potentially serious consequences?

1. Parents: Do not allow youth under age 21 to drink, even when you are present to supervise. It is against the law and you can be held liable for any harm that results if a party at your home should take a "wrong turn". Always chaperone your child's parties and make certain adults will be present at any party they attend.
2. College students: Is binge drinking "the norm" on your campus? Do you get tired of the noise, the vandalism, and the drunks in the halls (and the mess they leave!)? Let your administration know how it affects you. There may be many other people with the same opinion. Help organize and participate in alternative non-drinking recreation. Plan things on site or organize transportation for those students who are stuck on campus with no car.
3. Most importantly, if someone you know has consumed a lot of alcohol, or looks like they may pass out, **do not leave them alone**. Seek medical attention immediately by calling 911 or your campus's emergency number for anyone who loses consciousness after drinking. Follow their instructions and monitor the person's breathing until help arrives. You may save a friend's life!

More information is available from:
Lancaster County Drug & Alcohol
Commission
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Lancaster PA 17603