

Media release

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Why we should care more about youth drinking

With many young Australians in end of year celebration mode, the Alcohol and Drug Foundation has released a new resource called [‘Alcohol and Young People’](#) to shine a spotlight on the harms associated with adolescent drinking and to encourage the whole of community to take action to prevent and minimise these harms.

Alcohol is the most common drug used by young Australians. Nearly half of 12-17-year-olds have consumed alcohol in the past 12 months.

Traditionally, many Australians have been relaxed about young people drinking alcohol, but research now indicates this is a particularly risky time to consume alcohol because the brain is still developing.

“Research suggests parts of the brain developing during adolescence are sensitive to even small amounts of alcohol,” Alcohol and Drug Foundation CEO Dr Erin Lalor said.

“Binge drinking during adolescence may result in damage to the brain which can impair memory, concentration and learning capacity,” Dr Lalor added.

Alcohol also contributes to all of the leading causes of death for young Australians, including suicide, car crashes, accidental poisoning and assault. Additionally, youth drinking is connected to earlier and more harmful patterns of alcohol consumption.

“Although fewer adolescents are choosing to drink alcohol and are delaying drinking until later in life, alcohol still causes significant harm to many young Australians,” said Dr Lalor.

“As a society, we should be working harder to delay younger people’s consumption of alcohol,” Dr Lalor remarked.

Policymakers, schools and the wider community can take positive steps to help protect younger people from harms associated with alcohol. Parents play a significant role in shaping their child’s beliefs and attitudes around alcohol through their own alcohol-related behaviours.

“Parents remain the most likely group to provide alcohol to their children, which suggests many adults are not aware of the negative impacts alcohol has on young people, including the damage it can cause to the developing brain,” Dr Lalor said.

“Parental disapproval of their children drinking alcohol can reduce the likelihood of adolescent drinking,” Dr Lalor added.

The Alcohol and Drug Foundation's '[Alcohol and Young People](#)' resource details how parents can help to reduce alcohol-related harm, including:

- Know the facts about alcohol in adolescence. Explain why you don't want your kids drinking under the age of 18. Talk to your kids about boundaries, expectations, and consequences.
- Don't give alcohol to your children. Secondary supply laws make it illegal for anyone else to supply your child with alcohol without your permission.
- Communicate and share information with other parents to create a community culture that does not support adolescent drinking.
- Role model positive behaviour around alcohol, such as showing you don't need a drink to have fun or relax; sometimes turning down a drink; having celebrations without alcohol; and drinking within the Australian guidelines.
- If you're worried a young person is struggling with alcohol, contact one of the Alcohol and Drug Foundation's recommended services or call the [DrugInfo line](#) on 1300 85 85 84.

For a full copy of 'Alcohol and Young People' please click here https://adf.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/ADF_AOD_YoungPeople.pdf

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Media enquiries: For media enquiries, please call the Alcohol and Drug Foundation's Media Manager Carmel Green on 0430 948 380.

About the Alcohol and Drug Foundation: Celebrating nearly 60 years of service to the community, the Alcohol and Drug Foundation is one of Australia's leading bodies committed to preventing and minimising alcohol and other drug harms in communities around the nation. The Foundation reaches millions of Australians in local communities through sporting clubs, workplaces, healthcare settings and schools, offering educational information, drug and alcohol prevention programs and advocating for strong and healthy communities. For more information, please visit <https://adf.org.au/>.