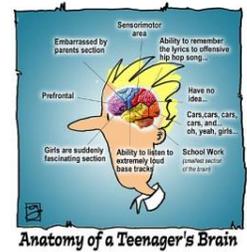


# It's not the drinking, it's the consequences!



**Effects on Brain Development** The brain goes through dynamic changes during adolescence and new research says that the brain is “still under construction” as it does not fully develop until the age 25. Research has also found that;

- The last area of the brain to develop is the prefrontal cortex. This part of the brain is involved in planning, decision making and impulse control.
- Damage from alcohol during the time the brain is maturing can have long-term and irreversible effects on the brain's development.
- Alcohol - and likely other drugs - affects the young person more profoundly than its effects on adults.
- The feelings and impaired behavior that signal intoxication in the adult brain are delayed in the adolescent brain. This can lead to over consumption and even alcohol poisoning which could be fatal.
- An adolescent brain that is exposed to alcohol and other chemicals is more susceptible to depression and other mental illnesses.

**Alcohol/Drug-Related Teen Injury and Deaths** It is a major cause of death from injuries among youth people, rates nearly triple between the early teen years and early adult life. It is also associated with car crashes, falls, drowning, burns, suicide, homicide, alcohol poisoning and drug overdoses. A 16-year-old is more likely to die from an alcohol-related incident than from any other causes.

**Increased Risk for Sexual Violence, Sexually-Transmitted Diseases and Unintended Pregnancy** Alcohol/drug use increases the risk of carrying out, or being the victim of a physical or sexual assault. It is heavily implicated in cases of date rape and sexual assault among teens and college students. Adolescents (ages 15 and older) who consume alcohol are seven times more likely to have sexual intercourse and twice as likely to have four or more sexual partners than non-drinking peers. Research shows they are also more likely to have unprotected sex, risking sexually transmitted diseases (STD's), HIV, the virus that causes AIDS and pregnancy.

**Increased Risk for Alcoholism and Drug Addiction** A study by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism offers scientific validation that young people who began drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcoholism than those who began drinking at age 21 or later. Current research explains that areas of an adolescent's brain that control impulsive behavior are not fully developed, yet circuits that reinforce the effect of chemical use are already operating in high gear. This puts young people who experiment even briefly with alcohol, drugs and tobacco at greater risk of becoming addicted.

**Effects on the body** The effects can range from hangovers to death from alcohol poisoning.

**Can lead to other problems.** Other problems including bad grades in school, run-ins with the law, burdens relationships with family and friends can be directly related to alcohol and drug use.

**Decision Making.** Affects how well a young person judge's risk and makes decisions. For example, after drinking, a teen may see nothing wrong with driving a car or riding with a driver that has been drinking. They may make decisions that they normally, if sober, wouldn't make.