The FACTS About Youth & Alcohol

Alcohol Use Is Widespread Among Today's Teenagers

- Nearly 70% of 8th graders perceive alcoholic beverages as "fairly easy" or "very easy" to get.
- By the time they complete high school nearly 80% of teenagers have consumed alcohol, 30% report having been drunk in the past month, and 29% report having 5 or more drinks in a row in the past two weeks.

Alcohol Use Increases Substantially From Middle To High School

- Approximately 20% of 8th graders report having recently (within the past 30 days) consumed alcohol compared to 35% of 10th graders and almost 50% of 12th graders.
- A little over 20% of 8th graders report having been drunk at least once in their life compared to almost 45% of 10th graders and 60% of 12th graders.

The Consequences of Underage Drinking

- A person who begins drinking as a young teen is four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than someone who waits until adulthood to use alcohol.
- During adolescence significant changes occur in the body, including the formation of new networks in the brain. Alcohol use during this time may affect brain development.
- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among youth ages 15 to 20, and the rate of fatal crashes among alcohol-involved drivers between 16 and 20 years old is more than twice the rate for alcohol-involved drivers 21 and older. Alcohol use also is linked with youthful deaths by drowning, suicide, and homicide.
- Alcohol use is associated with many adolescent risk behaviors, including other drug use and delinquency, weapon carrying and fighting, and perpetrating or being the victim of date rape.

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