



**Alcohol &  
your kids.**

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

Health New Zealand  
Te Whatu Ora

Updated September 2023





YOU  
HAVE  
INFLUENCE



# You have influence

Many of us are concerned that at some stage we, and our teens, will come face to face with the issue of alcohol and teenage drinking.

It may be your teenager wants their first taste of alcohol or is planning a party and wants alcohol supplied or has arrived home sick and drunk after a party.

Chances are high that your teenager will encounter alcohol – either through their own drinking or the drinking of someone else.

Helping them keep safe is your job – part of being a parent. Your advice and support is critical even though it may not always be welcomed.

As a parent or caregiver, there are things you can do to help reduce the impact of alcohol on your teenage children. These things may not be easy for everyone but they are proven to make the most difference in young people's drinking.

Some tips to make a difference in young people's drinking:

- 1 *Delay your teenager's introduction to alcohol as long as possible.*
- 2 *Be a good **role model** around your kids – either don't drink alcohol, or drink only small amounts.*
- 3 *Make sure you, or someone you know and trust, are **watching** your teenagers if they consume alcohol.*
- 4 *If you do supply alcohol, give only **small amounts**.*
- 5 *Have a good **relationship** with your teen, and keep communication open.*



What  
can I,  
DO?  
.....

a few tips to get started



# Be informed

**Alcohol is such an important issue for young people because:**

*Brains that are developing are more susceptible to being damaged by alcohol.*

*Teens have less physical tolerance to the effects of alcohol.*

*Even small amounts of alcohol can harm a young person.*

*Young people experience disproportionate harm related to their drinking or the drinking of someone else including:*

*physical injury  
violence and sexual assaults  
suicide and self-injury  
dropping out of school  
unemployment  
job loss  
social isolation  
health problems.*

Find out more at [alcohol.org.nz](http://alcohol.org.nz)

# Delay your teen’s drinking for as long as possible

Although you may feel that introducing alcohol to your teenagers is a way of teaching them to be responsible, research shows that the younger your kids or teens start drinking, the more likely it is that they will go on to drink harmfully in their late teens and adult life. Delaying starting drinking can help them avoid a range of harms.

## Advice for parents of children and young people under 18 years.

**Not drinking alcohol is the safest option for children and young people under 18 years.**

- > *Those under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking alcohol and not drinking in this age group is especially important.*
- > *For young people aged 15 to 17 years, the safest option is to delay drinking for as long as possible.*

*If 15 to 17 year olds do drink alcohol, they should be supervised, drink infrequently and at levels usually below and never exceeding the adult daily limits.*

## If giving alcohol to teenagers supply low amounts

Teenagers and young adults have less tolerance to alcohol than adults and suffer disproportionate harm from alcohol use. If you decide to supply your teen with alcohol, never exceed the recommended daily amounts for adults.

Low-risk alcohol drinking advice – for adults.

Reduce your long-term health risks	
	
No more than...	
<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
STANDARD DRINKS	STANDARD DRINKS
Daily	
and no more than 10 a week	and no more than 15 a week
And	
at least 2 alcohol-free days per week	

# What is a standard drink?

A 'standard drink' contains 10 grams of pure alcohol. Knowing how many standard drinks you're consuming is the key to understanding how much alcohol you're drinking, and to avoiding alcohol-related harm.



## Read the label

Under New Zealand law, all alcoholic drinks containers must state the number of standard drinks they include. Check the label to see how many standard drinks are inside.

## Know your numbers

If a bottle of wine states it contains eight standard drinks and you empty the bottle into four glasses, then each glass you've poured will equal two standard drinks.

## Playing the game

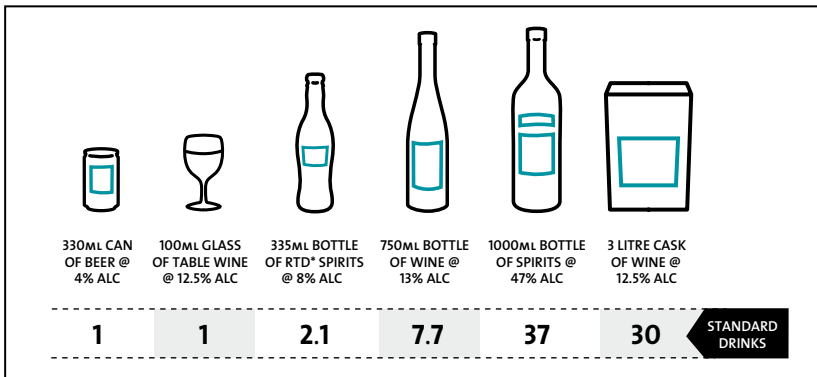
Can you pour a standard drink? and How much alcohol is that? are interactive games on **alcohol.org.nz**. They are a great way to learn about standard drinks and the amount of alcohol there is in a range of alcoholic drinks.



## Find out more at:

[alcohol.org.nz/alcohol-you/whats-standard-drink](https://alcohol.org.nz/alcohol-you/whats-standard-drink)

# A guide to standard drinks



\*RTD (READY TO DRINK)

# Parties and supervision

Consider having an alcohol-free party if children and teens will be there. If you are having a party with teenagers and alcohol is being served, you or a trusted adult need to actively supervise the party. Your involvement needs to be visible. You may ask that all guests come through the front door first so you know who is there.

Even if you don't stay in the same room all the time, young people will be safer if adults are moving through the party regularly. Serving food achieves this effortlessly.

If your teen is going to a party where alcohol is present, the adult hosts must have your express consent to supply alcohol to your teenager. This is the law. When contacting the host, it is also the perfect time to ask about time and place, supervision, alcohol and transport arrangements, and staying over. You may get a hard time from your teenager but persist. Do it openly. Tell them it's not about lack of trust, but it is simply the law and you are looking out for their safety.



*Serving food and water throughout the party allows you to monitor the state of the party and guests.*

## Role model

As parents or caregivers, you are probably the most important role model in your children's lives.

From the start, the attitude you model towards alcohol and the way you drink influences whether, or how, your child will drink in the future.

If you drink, model low-risk drinking. Establish and follow your personal rules for drinking responsibly, and be prepared to explain these rules to your teenager.

When you don't 'walk the talk', this adds to the conflicting messages young people receive around alcohol.

If you have young adults (18+) living at home, encourage them to be good role models for their younger family members.



# Tips for modelling low-risk drinking

## ✓ DO

- > *Make a point of sometimes refusing alcohol when your children are present.*
- > *Model responsible drinking around your children from when they are very young.*
- > *Make sure you provide food and non-alcoholic beverages when offering alcohol to guests.*
- > *Model healthy ways of coping with stress without alcohol like exercise, listening to music, or talking things over.*

## ⊗ DON'T

- > *Drink and drive.*
- > *Let other adults drive after attending a function at your place.*
- > *Portray alcohol as a good way to deal with stress, e.g. 'I've had a bad day, I need a drink'.*
- > *Convey the idea alcohol is fun or glamorous through stories about your own or others' drinking.*

If you're looking for help with your drinking, free and confidential advice is available on the **Alcohol Drug Helpline: 0800 787 797**

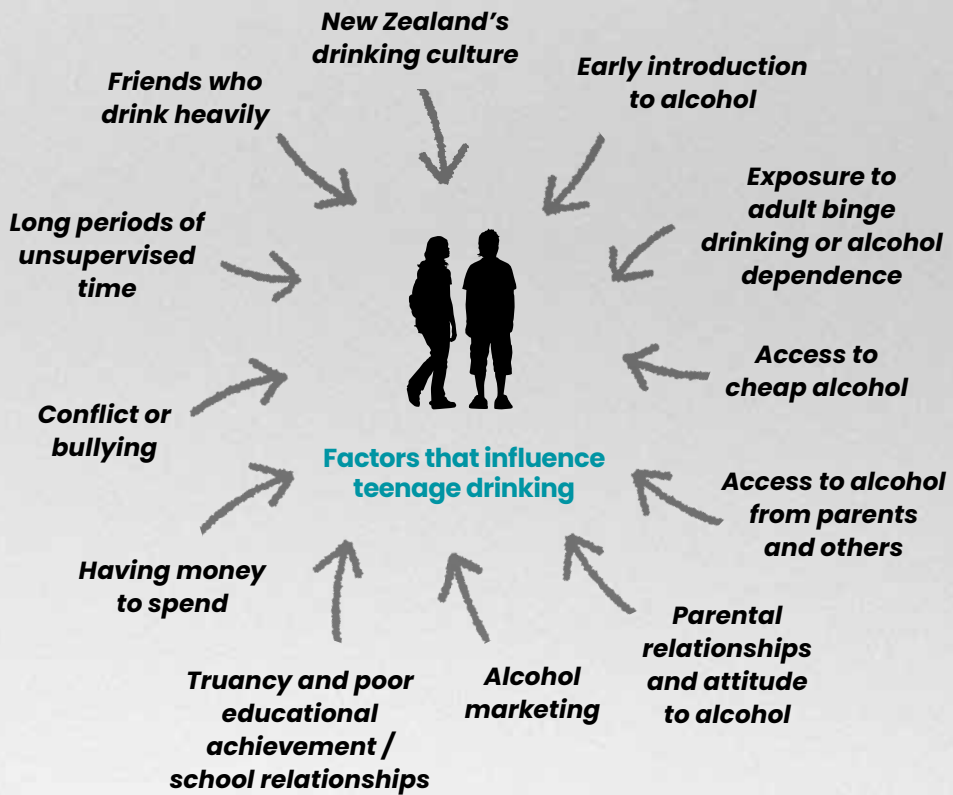
or free text  
**8681**



WHAT FACTORS

**INFLUENCE**  
**A TEENAGER'S**  
**DECISION**  
TO

**DRINK ALCOHOL?**





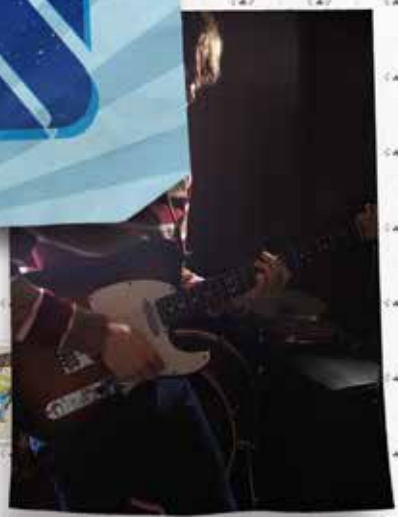
THE INFORMATION



# YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR KIDS



STAND UP FOR  
WE DON'T LUNCH  
AND B B B B  
GOOD C Z TIME  
A B C  
D E F  
G H I  
J K L  
M N O  
P Q R  
S T U  
V W X  
Y Z



Having a close and supportive relationship with your teenager is a hugely protective influence. Teens are less likely to misuse alcohol if parents are involved in their life in positive ways. A good relationship with your teenager will influence how effective your efforts are in protecting them from alcohol misuse, and increase the likelihood that they will seek help from you if they are faced with an issue regarding alcohol.

### **DISCUSS YOUR EXPECTATIONS AROUND THEIR ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION**

- › Spell them out and discuss why they're important.
- › Be reasonable. Being either too strict or too easy-going doesn't work.
- › Decide together what should happen when rules are broken, such as a grounding, loss of privileges, extra chores.
- › Follow through and apply the consequences. Both parents need to agree on and stick to the same rules – particularly if they're not living together. If your partner or ex won't support you, get other family members or friends to help.

### **WAYS TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR TEENAGER**

- › Set a good example.
- › Let them know they've 'got what it takes'.
- › Regularly demonstrate you care about them.
- › Be consistent and create open communication between you and your teen.
- › Follow through on promises and enforce rules to build trust.
- › Be involved in their life.
- › Help them feel good about themselves.
- › Help them deal with problems and stress.



*Build and maintain a good relationship with your teen. Keep talking to each other.*



**What does the law say?**

LEGAL

LICENSES / PERMITS

REGULATIONS & LEGISLATION

PLANNING / ZONING

The Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 controls the sale and supply of alcohol in New Zealand.

## Selling alcohol

It is illegal to sell alcohol to anyone under 18 years of age.

## Supplying alcohol

Someone under the age of 18 cannot be supplied with alcohol unless\*:

- > the person supplying the alcohol is **their parent or legal guardian AND** the alcohol is **supplied in a responsible manner, OR**
- > the person supplying alcohol has the **express consent** of the teenager's parent or legal guardian AND the alcohol is **supplied in a responsible manner.**

\*You could be fined up to \$2,000 if you don't follow this law.

## Who is a guardian?

A legal guardian is not another family member like an aunt, uncle, older brother or sister, older boyfriend or girlfriend, sports coach or anyone else acting temporarily in the place of a parent.

A person is only considered a teenager's legal guardian if he or she is recognised as a guardian under the Care of Children Act 2004.

## What does express consent mean?

If you're supplying alcohol to an under 18 year old who is not your teen, you need to ensure you have express consent from their parent or legal guardian before giving them alcohol.

Express consent may include a personal conversation, an email or text message that you have good reason to believe is genuine.

## WHAT DOES RESPONSIBLE MANNER MEAN?

### TO SUPPLY ALCOHOL TO TEENAGERS UNDER 18 RESPONSIBLY YOU SHOULD:

- > *supervise the drinking of alcohol*
- > *provide food*
- > *provide a choice of low-alcohol and non-alcoholic drinks*
- > *ensure safe transport options are in place.*

### ALSO CONSIDER:

- > *the nature of the occasion*
- > *the time period over which the alcohol is supplied*
- > *the strength and amount of alcohol supplied*
- > *the age of the teenager.*

## Drinking and driving

**There is a zero alcohol limit for anyone aged under 20. Anyone under 20 could be charged with drink driving if they consume any alcohol and then drive.**

# Handling things that go wrong





Some teenagers will experiment with alcohol and may push the boundaries. They may feel peer pressure to drink too much too fast, with harmful consequences.

For others, there may be underlying reasons for drinking, such as depression and anxiety. Have a look at [depression.org.nz](http://depression.org.nz) for information on how to help someone with depression or anxiety.

## **Going to parties they're not allowed to**

Choose a good moment for both of you and tell them how you feel about what they've done, including your worries for their safety. Give them a chance to explain. Go back over the rules you agreed to and take action – such as a grounding which includes the following weekend.

## **Taking alcohol from you**

Handle it just like any stealing within your family. Discuss what has happened. Follow through by taking suitable action like making your teenager pay for the alcohol taken.

## **Getting violent when drunk**

You don't need to put up with violence from anyone, even family members. If you can't control the situation, call someone who can come quickly, like a friend or the police.

## **Vomiting continuously**

Don't leave your teenager alone. Lay them on their side in the recovery position. Monitor their breathing and heart rate and make sure their mouth is empty. Keep them warm. If there is no improvement, dial 111 for an ambulance.

## **Dr unconscious**

***Call 111 for an ambulance.***



If you have concerns  
please call the Alcohol  
Drug helpline:

**0800 787 797**

or free txt:

**8681**

## **IF YOU BELIEVE YOUR TEEN IS ABUSING ALCOHOL**

There are a range of signs and behaviours which may indicate a teenager is drinking excessively, including:

- > *Repeated health complaints like vomiting.*
- > *Changes in sleeping patterns.*
- > *Mood changes, especially irritability.*
- > *Starting arguments, withdrawing from the family or breaking family rules.*
- > *Failing exams, missing assignments, frequent school absences or discipline problems at school.*
- > *Changes in social activities and social groups or friends.*
- > *Coming home drunk.*
- > *Smell of alcohol on their clothes, breath, skin, etc.*
- > *Missing sport, school, family events, etc.*
- > *Changes in behaviour – not being where they say they are going to be, etc.*

## **! NOTE**

Some of these signs can also result from other issues. If you believe your teenager is abusing alcohol, consider discussing your concerns with your GP to rule out other potential causes.

If you feel like things have moved past this point and you need extra help, the Alcohol Drug Helpline will be of assistance –

**0800 787 797**

or free txt:

**8681**

Find out more at [alcohol.org.nz](http://alcohol.org.nz)

# Where you can go for help

## **NZ's official alcohol website**

[alcohol.org.nz](http://alcohol.org.nz)

Get practical advice about alcohol and test your drinking.

## **Alcohol Drug Helpline**

**0800 787 797 or free text 8681**  
[alcoholdrughelp.org.nz](http://alcoholdrughelp.org.nz)

Free advice and details of support services in your area.

## **National Depression Initiative website**

[depression.org.nz](http://depression.org.nz)

Learn about supporting someone with depression or anxiety.

## **Common Ground**

[commonground.org.nz](http://commonground.org.nz)

Support for parents and whānau of young people.

## **KidsHealth**

[kidshealth.org.nz](http://kidshealth.org.nz)

Great information on kids of all ages, including a number of alcohol-specific resources.

## **Parent Help**

**0800 568 856, [parenthelp.org.nz](http://parenthelp.org.nz)**

Online advice and tools plus a free helpline for all parents.

## **The Parenting Place**

[theparentingplace.com](http://theparentingplace.com)

Includes a great article on how to talk to your teen about alcohol and drugs.

**Your teen may also want to check out these**

## **The Lowdown**

**0800 111 757**  
**or free text 5626**  
[thelowdown.co.nz](http://thelowdown.co.nz)

Straight up answers for when life sucks.

## **Sparx**

[sparx.org.nz](http://sparx.org.nz)

An online e-therapy tool for young people with depression and anxiety.

## **Youthline**

**0800 376 633**  
**or free text 234**  
[youthline.co.nz](http://youthline.co.nz)

Advice hub plus free counselling services for young people, parents and whānau.

For help, contact the  
Alcohol Drug Helpline on

**0800 787 797**

Free confidential information, insight  
and support for you and your family.

**Māori line**

**0800 787 798**



Free confidential information, insight  
and support for you and your whānau.

Whaka-tu-tangata  
stand tall – It's your call

**Pasifika line**

**0800 787 799**

Free confidential information, insight  
and support for you and your family.

It's your call



For up-to-date statistics and information check out:

**alcohol.org.nz**

**Health New Zealand**  
Te Whatu Ora

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