

Information on a wide range of health service and related issues can be obtained from our PALS office (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) based at the Primary Care Trust. You can also make comments about services. You can phone on: 0845 602 4832 or email: pals@wdpct.nhs.uk

Young people and alcohol – a guide for parents

You can visit our website: www.wakefielddistrict.nhs.uk

If you require this leaflet in another format such as large print, audio tape or other language, please contact the Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS) on 0845 602 4832.

اگر آپ کو یہ کتابچہ کسی دوسری صورت میں مثلاً بڑی لکھائی،
آڈیو ٹیپ یا کسی دوسری زبان میں چاہیے تو مہربانی کر کے
”پیشنٹ ایڈوائس اینڈ لیاؤن سروس“ سے اس نمبر پر مفت
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Alcohol and you

Children usually become aware of alcohol and drinking from an early age. There's a lot you can do to influence your children in a positive way, so they can make responsible decisions about alcohol in the future. Here is some information to help you along the way.

What happens to alcohol in our bodies?

Alcohol is absorbed into our body through the stomach and small intestine. From here, it's distributed throughout the body in the bloodstream, reaching the heart, brain, muscles and other tissues. Our body cannot store alcohol, so it has to get rid of it. This is done through the liver. The liver turns alcohol into a highly toxic substance, then into acetate (a harmless substance). However, alcohol can cause short and long-term harm to our bodies, especially in young people. Their brains are still developing and the effects of alcohol can cause long-term harm to their memory, affecting their lives and their education.

It's the law

- It is illegal to give alcohol to a child under five
- Under 16s can go into pubs under the supervision of an adult, but cannot have any alcoholic drinks
- Over 16s can drink beer, wine or cider with a meal in a restaurant
- It is against the law for under 18s to buy alcohol in a pub, off-licence, supermarket or other outlet
- It is also illegal for anyone to buy alcohol for someone under 18 to drink in a pub or public place.

Contacts

For more information on alcohol and safety limits:

- call Drinkline on 0800 917 8282. Calls are free and confidential from a landline. Drinkline offers information and self-help materials, help to callers worried about their own drinking, support to the family and friends of people who are drinking and advice to callers on where to go for help
- visit www.knowyourlimits.gov.uk
- visit www.drinkaware.co.uk
- alternatively, you should see your GP.

Did you know?

- Young people who drink are at risk of being involved in crime, sexual assaults, and harming their health in the long term.
- Around 7% of people who drown have alcohol in their system
- Around 50% of all pedestrians aged 16 to 60 who are killed in road accidents have more booze in their bloodstream than the legal drink drive limit
- 14 to 15-year-olds who drink alcohol are more likely to engage in sexual activity.

How alcohol can kill

Too much alcohol at any one time affects your body in two ways that can be dangerous:

- it stops the brain working effectively, and
- it makes us feel sick.

Your brain controls the heart, breathing and body temperature. It is like a thermostat that controls our body's central heating system or boiler. If we drink too much, the brain forgets to control our body temperature and the body winds down until something stops – like the heart!

Another effect of drinking too much alcohol at once is that it will cause you to feel sick and be sick. There is a high risk that if you are drunk and being sick you could choke to death. Even worse, being sick in this way can trigger an instant nerve reflex that stops the heart dead.

Alcohol and sex

Because alcohol increases risk-taking behaviour and impairs judgment, young people who drink are more likely to have sex and are less likely to practice safe sex. This increases their risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and an increased risk of unwanted pregnancy and sexual assault.

Alcohol misuse

Alcohol misuse can be a factor in:

- potentially fatal alcohol poisoning;
- alcohol dependency or alcoholism;
- sexual difficulties including impotence
- cirrhosis of the liver (scarring of the liver which prevents the liver from working properly);
- liver cancer;
- pancreatitis (an inflammation of the gland that lies behind your stomach and guts);
- stomach disorders and stomach ulcers;
- mood changes;
- brain damage including memory loss or dementia (a life-threatening brain disease);
- increased blood pressure;
- heart disease or strokes;
- stress and anxiety, depression, poor concentration; and
- long-term mental health issues.

Research has also linked long-term alcohol misuse to some cancers, including throat and breast cancers.