



Talking to your kids

about **alcohol**

As a parent you have **more influence**
over your child than you may realise

drinkaware

Alcohol and Children

Did you know there's evidence that children are more likely to be drinking underage if their parents drink to excess?¹ What they see at home helps children think about how they might drink as an adult. So, just as children learn to walk and talk like their parents, they learn how to drink like them too.

Evidence shows that meaningful conversations between parents and their kids helps children develop a sensible relationship with alcohol². You can follow these simple tips to start the alcohol chat with your child:

- If you choose to drink alcohol, don't feel hypocritical for doing so when you have told your children they can't. Instead, explain that alcohol is only for adults because their bodies have finished growing, and even adults have rules about how much they can drink.
- Talk to your kids about how drinks come in different strengths and sizes and let them know what an alcohol unit is and how it's measured.
- Children notice if their parents have different drinking patterns at special occasions or on holiday. To avoid confusing them, explain that usually you stick to the low risk unit guidelines.



- If you have guests at home, offer a choice of non-alcoholic and alcoholic beverages
- Try to avoid talking about alcohol as a cure for stress e.g. "I've had a hard day, I really need a drink".
- If you do decide to have a drink, try sticking to a small glass of something with your meal rather than as soon as you get through the door.

Talk openly to your children about how alcohol makes you feel. Explain the after effects of alcohol the next day and let them know these effects would be worse for them as they're smaller and their bodies are still developing. Try to avoid any conversations that glamorise your own or a friend's drinking.

*The UK Chief Medical Officer advises that an **alcohol-free childhood is the healthiest and best***

*For adults, to keep the risks from alcohol to a low level, the UK Chief Medical Officers recommends that it is **safest not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis**. If you regularly drink as much as 14 units a week, it's best to spread your units evenly over three days or more.*

Answering difficult questions about alcohol

What does **alcohol taste like?**

You could say:

Wine tastes a bit like sour grape juice, cider like sour apple juice and beer can be bitter. Because taste buds change as you get older you might find alcohol doesn't taste very nice.

Why do you and other adults drink?

You could say:

Because I like the taste and because alcohol in small amounts can relax you and make you feel good. But there are other ways of feeling good and relaxing – shall we talk about some of them?

What does it feel like to be drunk?

You could say:

It can make you feel dizzy and silly. If you have too much you can be very silly – dangerously so. Sometimes you don't care what you say or do. And afterwards you can feel sick and have a headache – a hangover.

My friends have all tried booze, so why can't I?

You could say:

I cannot decide what other kids get up to – but I care about you. Alcohol, even a small amount, would harm you now and I love you far too much to risk that.

Is drinking **dangerous?**

You could say:

Yes, particularly at your age as your body is still developing. Drinking alcohol can make you less aware of danger, so you're more likely to hurt yourself. It has been linked to problems with your liver and even your performance at school.

It looks really fun, **why are you trying to stop me enjoying myself?**

You could say:

Yes, it can be fun when your body is fully grown, and even then it can lead to problems. Hangovers or having to remember the stupid things you did while drunk aren't fun. Drinking too much can also make you poorly. Let's think of other things you can do to unwind or have fun. But drinking isn't one of them – it's bad for you and I say no.

For more information and advice about alcohol visit **drinkaware.co.uk**

Drinkaware offers a range of information, tips and advice about alcohol including downloadable resources. We also have a mobile app to track and calculate the units and calories in your drink.

If you are concerned about your own or someone else's drinking you can get confidential, **free help and advice by:**

- Contacting your **GP**
- **Calling Drinkline on 0300 123 1110** - a free, confidential helpline
- Finding local alcohol services at :
www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Alcoholsupport.aspx

Other useful **contacts:**

Addiction

If you are concerned that you or someone you care about has a problem with alcohol phone Drinkline on **0300 123 1110** or visit **addaction.org.uk** to find your local Addaction services.

Mental health

YoungMinds provides information and advice on young people and mental health. Visit **youngminds.org.uk** or call **020 7089 5050**.

1 IPSOS Mori (2015) Drinkaware Monitor 2014: Young people's drinking behaviour and attitudes in the UK.

2 Newbury-Birch et al. (2008). Impact of Alcohol Consumption on Young People: A Systematic Review of Published Reviews. Department for Children Schools and Families. Research Report DCSF-RR067.