

# ASSESSING KNOWLEDGE - HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ALCOHOL?

## The decision on whether to drink or not, PSHE 11 - 14 (accompanying notes for pictorial worksheet)

Begin the session by asking

Do you know what alcohol is?

Alcohol is produced from the sugar contained in fruits, vegetables, cereals and plants, by a process called fermentation. Yeast converts the sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide – a natural process.

The amount of alcohol in drinks can be increased by a boiling process called distillation. This makes spirits such as gin, vodka, whisky and rum, which usually contain about 40% pure alcohol. (For more information see page 109, Teacher Workbook).

Alcohol is a legal drug, in that it depresses your nervous system and alters your mood, behaviour, judgement and reactions. If abused, it can lead to dependency or addiction.

What is your general attitude towards alcohol?

Good (e.g. celebration, relaxation, sociable, etc.)

Bad (e.g. health risks, personal risks such as accidents, violence and disorder, addiction).

Think about how much, with whom and where.

Have you ever come into contact with alcohol?

(e.g. had some, seen adverts, seen it in the shops, parents drink at home, etc.)

Is it common for friends around you to drink?

If so, when does this happen?

(e.g. parties, specific places, etc.)

Who do you listen to in alcohol-related issues?

(e.g. parents, siblings, friends, adults, peers, etc.)

What do you know about the dangers of alcohol, especially when underage?

(e.g. alcohol poisoning, accidents, becoming violent, underage sex, in trouble with police and parents).

### 'Musical Chairs - How we are influenced by alcohol' game

This activity can be done through a rapid fire 'hot seat format'. You can adjust the statements according to the age group.

Get students to stand in a large circle around the room

1. Read out the statements listed below one at a time.
2. If students feel that the statement applies to them they should cross the circle to the other side.
3. By the end of the statements most students will most likely have moved at least once – most more than that.
4. Ask them what they think this game demonstrates.

*Almost all of us, even if we don't drink are affected by alcohol at some point, what matters is how we use it.*

## Statements

### For younger students:

You've seen adverts for alcohol
You can name five brands of alcohol (Bacardi, Smirnoff, Carlsberg, Stella, Blossom Hill etc)
You can name five different kinds of alcohol (beer, wine, spirits, cider, alcopops, port, sherry, gin, vodka etc.)
You've tried alcohol (may want to say – was this at home, at a party, with friends or adults etc.)
You've seen someone who's drunk
Your parents drink at home
You've seen alcohol featured in soaps and films
You've read/seen documentaries about drink drive risk/binge drinking
You've been bought alcohol by someone else
You've been in a pub
You've had a hangover
You have a friend who drinks alcohol
You've heard about alcohol, but have never tasted it
You've had a whole alcoholic drink in the last week
You've seen adverts about the dangers of drinking too much

### For older students you may wish to add in some of the following statements to assess experience:

You've had a house party
You have been to, or are planning to go to a festival
You drink weekly/ monthly/ rarely/ not at all
You have got in to a club
You've bought alcohol yourself
You have tried to buy alcohol
You have been served alcohol
You have been drunk
You have been ill or passed out due to drinking
You have helped a friend get home safely when they have had too much to drink.

## The decision on whether to drink (answers for pictorial worksheet)

We advise you to download or photocopy [the decision on whether to drink or not blank sheet](#), (page 10, Teacher Workbook or online via [alcoholeducationtrust.org](#)) and ask pupils to write down or say what they think. You can draw a spidergram as a class or in small groups and then compare answers with the [completed answer sheet](#).

You will notice that the answers given on the answer sheet (page 11, Teacher Workbook or on line via [alcoholeducationtrust.org](#)) are subtly different from what will be written down by the class, this is to encourage your pupils to think beyond the obvious motivations for drinking.

### Activity

If you just ask 'Why do people drink?' most students will write down some of the following:

to celebrate, to have fun, to feel grown up, to fit in – it's difficult to say no, to rebel, to get a buzz, nothing else to do, to feel cool (bravado – especially among boys), to relax and unwind, its sociable, to get plastered, it stops me feeling stressed/ I feel more relaxed, it gives you confidence.

Instead we recommend that you:

- o Divide the class into groups and ask each group to think about one of the following questions.
- o Ask them to rank the reasons as high or low risk. You can ask pupils to use post-it notes, then come up and place them on a low/medium/ high risk continuum.
- o Discuss these motivations.
- o Introduce the notion of how the decision to consume alcohol is associated with different reasons: where you drink (safety issues – home re secretly), speed of drinking (with food, pacing with soft drinks).

The answer sheet will help you expand some of the motives to extend the discussion beyond the more positive reasons your students will give for drinking or not.

- o Summarise the feedback from the class, note areas where they have confused ideas, are curious, accurate or have the wrong impressions and use this detail to tailor the approach of your future lessons.

Question 1: Why do you think most 11 - 15 year-olds choose not to drink?

Answers might include: my religion, don't like the taste, don't feel the need, health reasons, scared parents will find out, might lose control and do something stupid, wait 'til old enough to handle it, it's fattening, it's against the law, know that if you get caught drinking underage you can get a police

record (can't go to the US, can't get insurance etc.)

Question 2: Do teenagers give different reasons for drinking to adults

Example answers: rebel, feel grown up, cool, peer pressure, curiosity - Talk about why this could be risky.

Adults drink for some of the same reasons (e.g. to relax, socialise, stress, confidence).

Alcohol consumption and age

Those 13 - 14 year-olds who drink do so out of curiosity and to feel what it's like to be drunk. It becomes an exciting game – planning how to get hold of alcohol, hiding it from nosy parents, drinking on the sly and then discussing and commenting on everything that happens.

For 17 - 18 year-olds, drinking is more of a social activity, part of going out and meeting friends.

Question 3: Why do many adults choose to drink?

Answers may include: to relax, be sociable, unwind, forget worries, stress, to feel more confident.

### Expanded answers to questions that may arise

#### Calories?

Alcohol is fat free but high in calories. A standard half litre of beer has approximately 130 calories, as does a 150ml glass of dry wine. Alcohol can also make you feel hungry, it stimulates your appetite while reducing your self-control, so you're more likely to binge eat if you binge drink.

#### Allergy?

Some people, especially Asians lack the gene that breaks down alcohol, which makes alcohol consumption lead to feeling very sick and facial flushing.

#### Supply?

It is illegal to buy or be served alcohol if you're under 18. You can get a friend a criminal record if you ask them to buy you alcohol when you're under age. You can drink in the family home with parental supervision from age 5.

#### Stress?

A little alcohol will help you feel relaxed and unwind, but more than that and it has a depressing effect. Lots of alcohol gives you an irregular heart beat and can lead to feelings of panic and increased stress.

#### Pregnancy?

Drinking too much leads to doing things you wouldn't do if you were sober – going home with someone you hardly know, not taking the right precautions, increasing your risk of STDs and an unplanned pregnancy.

Drinking heavily when pregnant can lead to birth defects called Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, which include

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## **Sport?**

Alcohol and sport are not good mixers. Alcohol slows down reaction times, increases body heat loss and reduces endurance. It is also dehydrating.

## **Combination?**

Never mix alcohol with drugs - either prescribed drugs, unless cleared with your doctor - or illegal drugs or novel psycho active substances (legal highs).

## **Why is it against the law to buy alcohol for under 18s or to be served alcohol if you can drink at home?**

Laws regulate the purchase and consumption of alcohol in most countries around the world. In America, the Legal Drinking Age (LDA) is 21, here in the UK it is 18, unless you are under parental supervision or at home.

## **Health risks**

LDAs exist because the same amount of alcohol has a much greater effect on the body of a young person than on an adult as the body is still growing and developing. The brain and liver are not fully formed either, so binge drinking in particular will cause even more harm than for an adult. Alcohol, when it is broken down by your body, makes toxins (poisons). Drinking too much too fast, especially when young, can lead to alcohol poisoning, coma or even death.

The earlier the age at which children drink, and the more they drink, the greater the risk of injury and trying other risky things... exam results and attendance suffer too.

## **Getting hurt - accidents, fights**

As alcohol affects judgement, coordination, mood, reactions and behaviour, you are more vulnerable to hurting yourself or someone else if you have been drinking, especially if you're underage. 50% of 15 year-olds who drink have suffered negative consequences such as an argument, fight, theft or assault (NHS Information Centre 2010).

It is legal to drink under parental supervision from the age of 5 to allow parents or carers to make the right choices – they may decide no alcohol before the age of 18 is the right policy, or they may think a small amount at a wedding or celebration is appropriate. It is a parent or carer's responsibility to keep young people safe until they are adult.

See PSHE/PSD 14 - 16 worksheet 2 [Why are young people advised not to drink](#), if you want to take this discussion further, (page 31, Teacher Workbook).

**Did you know?** 50% of adults globally choose not to drink for religious, health or other reasons.

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## TEACHER NOTES

### Fact or fiction?

(PSHE/PSD 11 - 14 worksheet 4)

Target age group: 11 - 14 year-olds

Structure: 1 lesson

Preparation: Download/photocopy [Fact or fiction question](#) sheet and [detailed answers](#).

Access to the Internet: [Talkaboutalcohol.com](http://Talkaboutalcohol.com)

### Objectives

- o To consider some of the myths and frequently asked questions about alcohol.

### Notes

This could be done in small groups or as a whole class with people calling their answers and inviting challenges from others.

Alternatively, the quiz, (page 104, Teacher Workbook) could be a good way of getting students to research the answers by looking at the information on the Talk

About Alcohol website.

### How well do you know your age group?

(PSHE/PSD 14 - 16 worksheet 5)

Target age group: 14 - 16 year-olds

Structure: 1 lesson

Preparation: Download/photocopy [How well do you know your age group?](#) sheet and [accompanying answers](#).

### Objectives

- o To dispel myths about alcohol and young people.
- o To allow young people to compare their own behaviour with the norm.
- o To encourage young people to understand that they are not in the minority if they choose not to drink.

### Notes

Young people often think that most of their peer group drink more alcohol than they actually do, perhaps because people tend to exaggerate how much they drink when telling others. By looking at the results as a class and not just individual's answers, it will reinforce for students what normal behaviour actually is and highlight whether they have unrepresentative notions of alcohol consumption. It may also help them feel more comfortable about drinking less or not drinking at all.