

ASSESSING KNOWLEDGE - HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ALCOHOL?

The decision on whether to drink, 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 103**). 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).

This activity can be done through a rapid fire 'hot seat format' (**page 88**) – see the 'Musical chairs - How we are influenced by alcohol' game on **page 93** for suggested statements.

We advise you to download or photocopy the blank worksheet of **The decision on whether to drink?** (on **page 6** and 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 fact sheet.

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

You will notice that the answers given on the answer

sheet (**page 7** 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.

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.

Activity

- o Divide the motives into OK or risky.
- 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 Ask the question: **Why do you think 55% of young people choose to not start drinking alcohol at ages 11 - 15?**

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, 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.)
- o Discuss why 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

13 - 14 year olds drink 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.

- 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.

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 which 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 facial abnormalities and learning difficulties.

Sport?

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

Combination?

Never mix alcohol with drugs – either prescribed drugs, unless cleared with your doctor, or illegal drugs, such as cocaine, ecstasy, heroin and so on.

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 chance of developing serious liver disease in adult life. Patients are now presenting with terminal liver disease in their late twenties and early thirties.

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've been drinking, especially if you're underage.

It is legal to drink under parental supervision to allow parents 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'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 24](#)).

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

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** sheet.

Access to the Internet: 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 out what they think is the answer and inviting challenges from others.

Alternatively, the quiz could be a good way of getting students to research the answers by looking at the information on the Talk About Alcohol website.

Alcohol education - What do you want?

(PSHE/ PSD 11 -14 worksheet 5)

Target age group: 11 - 14 and 14 - 16 year-olds

Structure: 1 or 2 lessons

Preparation: Download/photocopy **Alcohol Education – What do you want?** sheet.

Objectives

- o To find innovative ways to educate other young people about alcohol.
- o To distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
- o To identify and communicate strategies for reducing the dangers associated with excessive 'drinking to get drunk'.
- o To select and use the results of independent research to take an informed, objective viewpoint.

Notes

This work, especially the posters, could be displayed at a public event for parents when talking about alcohol and young people.

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.

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 them 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.