

Are you breathing a sigh of relief that the kids have gone back to school, or are you missing the hustle and chaos of the holidays? What a Summer! And with this glorious September weather too, we've been blessed this year.

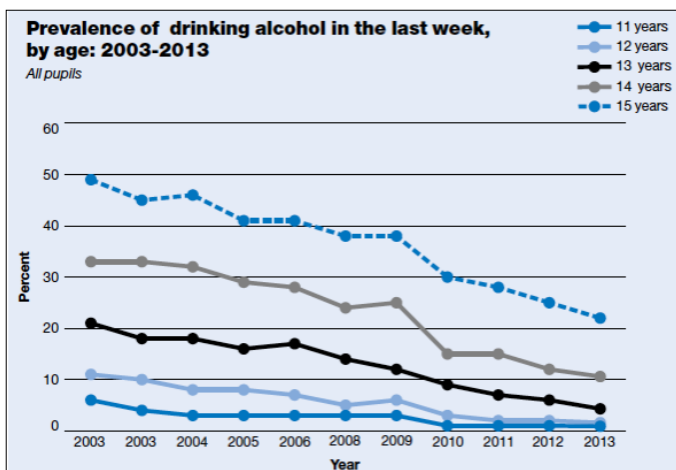
It's always a worrying time of the year with our kids starting at new schools, going off to College, starting sixth form or GCSE options. New friendship groups mean parties and get togethers... so if you have any worries about alcohol and how to have a reasonable chat with your kids, take a look at www.alcoholeducationtrust.org/Pages/Parents/parenthome.html or send us an email via info@alcoholeducationtrust.org - we'll answer you personally and in confidence.

We hope you enjoy the articles below – best wishes as ever, Helena, Kate, Sandra and Alison

Kids drinking less than ever, but parents unaware and still the main source of supply

There's been some really interesting research that's come out over the summer – first of all, although you'd never guess from the media stories, our kids continue to drinking less than ever – a third less than ten years ago – and see getting drunk as less acceptable than ever before. According to The Health and Social Care Information Centre, the number of 11-to-15-year-olds who drink weekly had dropped from 25% in 2003 to 9% in 2013. A sharp fall has been recorded in the number of children aged under 18 being admitted to A&E due to alcohol too. Admissions have fallen from 10,819 to 7,982 in four years, but that's still 167 a week!

However, parents (over 95% of them) presume things are much the same, or even getting worse. When parents were asked in the Yougov poll why they thought drinking by teenagers was falling, they said it was due to it being harder to buy alcohol and because phones, game and devices meant kids stayed in more.



YOUNG PEOPLE IN ENGLAND ARE DRINKING LESS ALCOHOL

11-15 YEAR OLDS REPORTING HAVING EVER HAD AN ALCOHOLIC DRINK

34% DECREASE (2004-2013)

MORE THAN 9 OUT OF 10 PARENTS DID NOT KNOW THIS

11-15 YEAR OLDS THINKING IT IS OK TO DRINK ALCOHOL ONCE A WEEK

33% DECREASE (2004-2013)

MORE THAN 9 OUT OF 10 PARENTS DID NOT KNOW THIS

WHERE 11-15 YEAR OLDS REPORT GETTING ALCOHOL FROM

- 75% FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS
- 19% FROM STRANGERS
- 5% FROM PUBS AND SHOPS
- 1% OTHER

8 OUT OF 10 PARENTS DID KNOW THAT FRIENDS AND FAMILY WERE THE MAIN SOURCES OF ALCOHOL

WHY PARENTS THINK YOUNG PEOPLE ARE DRINKING LESS...

- 57% SHOPS AND PUBS BEING STRICTER
- 25% SOCIAL MEDIA/TECH PROVIDING OTHER THINGS TO DO
- 20% INCREASING DIVERSITY
- 18% DON'T KNOW
- 15% ALCOHOL LABELS AND PUBLIC MESSAGING
- 15% STRICTER PARENTING
- 12% YOUNG PEOPLE REBELLING AGAINST OLD ATTITUDES
- OTHER

Certainly what's true is that parents are the main suppliers of alcohol to those under 18 (the newest UK figures suggest 75% is from parents or family), as buying alcohol if under age is ever harder.

The effect of parents supplying alcohol to their young children

A study conducted by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, followed nearly 2,000 parent and child pairs over four years in Australia. It suggests parents who allow their young teenagers to drink alcohol in the hope it will teach them responsible drinking habits later on in life may be having the opposite effect. The study found that teenagers whose parents allowed alcohol in their early teens are three times more likely to drink full serves of alcohol at age 16, compared to those who wait.

The study's chief investigator, Professor Richard Mattick, said parents are confused about the best way to moderate their children's drinking. But he says the study shows supplying booze doesn't work, with the biggest predictor for drinking alcohol in year 10 being early parental supply through school years 7 to 9. 'Many of these do so with the best of intentions, to introduce alcohol in a safe, supervised environment, with the aim of moderating a child's drinking.'

Professor Mattick said the findings of the study were a surprise and recommends parents to be aware of the risks associated with supplying alcohol to their children at too young an age – So we suggest following the Chief Medical Officer guidance of waiting until age 15. About one in six children in the study reported being given alcohol by their parents at age 12 and 13 – far too young! 'The results showed that those children who are given alcohol by their parents may be more likely to seek out alcohol from a variety of other sources,' said Dr Monika Wadolowski, who recently completed a PhD on aspects of the research.

We can't always be blamed for our kids' risky behaviour

Another interesting study looked at the importance of setting alcohol-specific parental rules and risky personality types and the effect on drinking.

We all know that what works for one of our kids, may not work for another, having to mix a balance of rewarding good behaviour, monitoring them without them being too aware and making sure you carry out threats such as grounding them, if rules have been broken. Wait for those slamming doors and 'nobody else's parents are like you'.

So much research now is showing that being strict but loving, what's called the 'tough love' approach, works best – i.e your kids know there are consequences if they break the rules, but you're not over strict or unreasonable and you keep talking even if you only get grunts in return. This helps protect against all sorts of risky behaviours, not just drinking.

This study of 200 youngsters over 2 years found that if parents were too laid back their kids started drinking earlier and drank more heavily. But if kids felt depressed or were sensation seeking, parents setting boundaries and rules didn't help. So, it's not always our fault if it all goes wrong - try and talk it through and don't fly off the handle as getting drunk for the first time can be a really scary experience. Do email us if you would like specific advice or where to go for support. You can download or parent advice booklet [here](#) too.

Off to College or University?

There are basic rules of safety to gently remind new students about before they fly the nest! Those first weeks can be both daunting and exciting and plans can be spontaneous and not always thought through. Remind them always to have a fully charged phone when they go out, to have planned how they are going to get home BEFORE leaving, to put enough money aside to get home if needed. Going out is an expensive business, and opting for soft drinks in between alcoholic ones can help them save a bit as well as keep more in control - it's good advice to avoid getting involved in buying big rounds - due to cost and then having to keep up with everyone. Remind them never to leave drinks unattended - and never to leave anywhere on their own - look after your mates and make sure they look after you.

A survey over the summer showed that students at Bristol Uni spend the most on drink - and there's an interesting blog [here](#) by a student 'How much is too much? - The importance of moderation for freshers'. Olivia Turner considers the issues and dangers of binge drinking among university 'freshers' during their first week of attendance. Ms Turner suggests that young people should exercise moderation and learn their own limits, but argues that the introduction of health warning labels would be unlikely to make any significant difference in moderating the culture of binge drinking.



Our Dryvember Christmas PREtox challenge



Knowing that December is full of boozy Christmas parties, late nights and celebrations, why not give your body a good 'pretox' and take a break from the booze this November to prepare yourself for the festive season?!

By taking on the challenge you're sure to look your best and slip into that cocktail dress a little easier, or tighten a notch on your belt while saving a few quid. You'll then be on top form for the festive season – The challenge will help you save up for it too!

You can try a week during Alcohol Awareness Week (17th - 23rd November) - maybe get a group of friends or some fellow parents at school involved, a half marathon of 13 days or the full monty of 26 days! We've allowed you a couple of days to fall off the wagon if it helps so you don't miss out on special occasions.

The money you donate will help The Alcohol Education Trust make a real difference in schools across Britain – we train teachers, reach out to parents and support pupils aged 11- 18 with the Talk About Alcohol programme. We are hoping to raise £26,000 with this campaign to employ a new regional coordinator and to support 25,000 pupils in 100 schools - so please have a go! We will send you details at the end of September of how to sign up - but start talking about it now!

For further information on any of the above please contact

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