

The panic of buying school shoes and uniform is over as is the guilty relief of packing the kids off back to school! Time to juggle after school clubs and nag about homework again though, not to mention getting them to bed earlier and getting them up in the morning!

The new term brings different stresses and pressures on our kids, whether settling into a new school or starting GCSE or A level course work. Friendship groups can change and changes of tutors all affect



how our kids feel. Remember to encourage them to take up opportunities of hobbies, sports and school clubs if this is possible for you. Kids who are bored and hang around after school without much to do, especially if you're working, are much more likely to start risk taking and alcohol can be part of that, of course. Youth clubs, sports clubs and community centres as well as school itself should have lots of things on offer that can help.

Is there a 'correct age' to let my child drink alcohol?













If we were given a penny for every time we were asked that question! The first thing we always point out, is that there is a world of difference between sips and whole drinks. Many parents choose to let their child have a small amount on special occasions to help them feel part of the event and to stop the idea of 'taboo' and so avoid kids experimentation without them knowing. Interestingly, research is showing that children who are allowed small amounts or sips are more likely to come from families where parents provide stricter alcohol-specific rules, stricter monitoring of the child's activities, more consistent parenting practices and more positive family relationships, fewer substance-using peers and greater peer disapproval of any substance use (Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research, August 2015) – so it seems it's all down to the amount, how often and at what age.

What we do know is the more relaxed you are around alcohol with your children at home, the more likely children are to drink alcohol outside of the home, where risk taking is likely to take place, and if teenagers drink whole drinks regularly under the age of 15, they are more likely to smoke, use other illicit substances and not do so well in their GCSEs – it makes sense really, if they're out partying, they're not going to be home doing their homework and revision!

We think The Chief Medical Advisor's guidelines for parents are very sensible – that an alcohol free childhood is best before the age of 15, and then to stick to the guidelines of 2-3 units for women and 3-4 units for men, not more than once a week.

The following advice from the UK Chief Medical Officers applies to those under the legal drinking age:

- o An alcohol-free childhood is the healthiest and best option.
- o If children do drink alcohol, they should not do so until they are at least 15 years old.
- o Drinking alcohol can damage a child's health, even if they're 15 or older.
- o If 15 to 17 year-olds drink alcohol, it should be rarely, and never more than once a week. They should always be supervised by a parent or carer.
- o If 15 to 17 year-olds drink alcohol, they should never exceed the recommended adult daily limits (3-4 units of alcohol for men and 2-3 units for women).
- o If your child intends to drink alcohol, using positive practices such as incentives, setting limits, agreeing on specific boundaries and offering advice can help.

NHS and UK Chief Medical Officers' advice on units and drinking guidelines What is a unit and how much is too much?			
 <p>A pint of lower strength (4%) beer or cider 2 UNITS</p>	 <p>A pint of medium strength (5%) beer or cider 3 UNITS</p>	 <p>A 440ml can of medium strength (5%) beer or cider 2 UNITS</p>	 <p>A 500ml can of high strength (7.5-9%) beer or cider 4 UNITS</p>
 <p>A small bottle (275ml) of lower strength (4%) alcohol 1 UNIT</p>	<p>The UK Chief Medical Officers recommend that adults do not regularly exceed:</p> <div>  <p>3-4 units a day for men</p>  <p>2-3 units a day for women</p> </div>		 <p>A single measure of spirit (40%) 1 UNIT</p>
 <p>A large bottle (750ml) of higher strength (5%) alcohol 3.5 UNITS</p>	 <p>A standard glass (175ml) of lower strength (12%) wine or champagne 2 UNITS</p>	 <p>A small glass (125ml) of higher strength (14.5%) wine 2 UNITS</p>	 <p>A large glass (250ml) of lower strength (12%) wine 3 UNITS</p>
<p>Find the number of units in other drinks by visiting the drinkaware unit calculator (drinkaware.co.uk tips and tools/drink diary)</p>			

What's the law around drinking at home and supply by parents to teenagers?

There are very different rules around the purchase and serving of alcohol to those under the age of 18 – Basically, with the exception of with a plated meal, where those over the age of 16 can be served a glass of beer, wine or cider if accompanied by an adult, 18 is the minimum age for buying or being served drinks. It's also an offence for an adult to knowingly purchase alcohol for someone under the legal drinking age, this is called buying by proxy – and it is designed to stop children asking an older siblings or friends to buy them alcohol.



HOWEVER, in your own home, it is legal for a child to have alcohol over the age of 5! This is because historically many medicines contained alcohol - so the bottom line is, as parents and carers, you set the rules, you are the role models and it is you who your kids look up to – although it might not seem like it at times!

When's the right time to have 'the conversation'?



Try to make a conversation around alcohol as natural as possible – there maybe a storyline on TV or in the news on teenage drinking, or something that's happened locally or in their friendship group. The key is not to wait until something goes wrong and it's too late! What we call the 'tipping point' when kids become more interested in what older children are getting up to at school, and presume they're all having a wild time and getting drunk (which under 20% of them are doing, even when age 16 - 24) is at age 12 - 14 depending on the maturity of your child. You'll find lots of tips on our website via www.alcoholeducationtrust.org in the

parent area. You'll need to think about setting ground rules and consequences for breaking them as they get older (such as what time to be home and keeping their mobile on and ringing you when you ask). Teenagers say it's reasonable for you to do this and it is good to negotiate the rules together – and adapt them as they get older of course! If you have any worries, you can send us a confidential email via info@alcoholeducationtrust.org

Are you on a PTA, a Governor or do you help with fundraising at school?

If so, don't forget to mention that we are very happy to come into your school and host an informal talking to kids about alcohol session for your school – this can be part of a GCSE option evening, or meet the tutor evening or combined with another speaker on safety or drugs, for example. Just get in touch with Kate via kate@alcoholeducationtrust.org

Fundraiser

We have a fund raising event in Dorchester on the 1st October hosted by Paul Atterbury of The Antiques road show. Local businesses, authors and politicians have been so generous in their support with signed books from Kate Adie, Lord Fellows and Minette Walters, tea offered at The House of Lords and the House of Commons and hampers from Olives et al, Clipper and Dorset Tea, Fudges and many more! If you'd like to attend, contribute or buy raffle tickets please contact kate@alcoholeducationtrust.org



Did you spot coverage of our work on the news?

The AET was thrilled to be asked to appear on BBC Breakfast and on ITV Good Morning Britain in early September to talk about the importance of alcohol education in schools.

An evaluation of our work over the last 4 years by The National Foundation for Education Research showed that giving 4 lessons in Year 8 and 2 top up lessons in Year 9 from our 'Talk About Alcohol' programme delayed the age that teenagers started to drink whole drinks. We had a good discussion about the role of parents and how to feel confident in being good role models and setting boundaries on Good Morning Britain!



AET resources comprise of www.alcoholeducationtrust.org and www.talkaboutalcohol.com, a Teacher Workbook, booklets 'Alcohol and You' for 15yrs+ and 'Talking to Your Kids About Alcohol' parent and carer guide. We offer teacher CPD workshops and parent information talks.

For further information on any of the above please contact

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