

21: Why is Age so Important?

Plenty of youth and many adults wonder why drinking alcohol is not allowed until age 21. Share the facts so they can understand the importance of that age requirement. It's not about keeping them controlled. It's to keep their brains and bodies strong so they can fully develop.

Know that anyone can develop an alcohol problem, even a teen. Alcohol use should be delayed as long as possible. Someone who begins drinking as a young teen is four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than another who waits until adulthood.

If this information is new to you, don't sweat it. When we know better, we can do better.

- ★ *Alcohol can slow reaction time and impair judgment, vision, and coordination.*
- ★ *The brain has been shown to develop well into a person's twenties. Teens are far from that age, and alcohol use could cause changes in their brains while they're still developing.*
- ★ *School performance difficulties and other risky behaviors such as smoking, drug misuse, and risky sexual behaviors are some of the reasons to abstain.*

Sources: <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/minimum-legal-drinking-age>

**KEEP
SHOWING
UP**

They're Still Growing Up

Parenting: The Name of the Game

We know teens often think they're in charge. But parents get to make the rules, and you are still your teen's first role model. Making sure they know family rules, including not drinking alcohol underage, is as fundamental as the ABCs and 123s. As your teen develops, update your family rules accordingly. You may encounter some resistance, but that doesn't mean you must change the rules.

Get comfortable with the facts to give your teen a consistent no-use message. These conversations can be challenging, but keeping your children safe takes work and consistency.

There are many reasons to avoid alcohol. Maybe there's a family history of alcohol use disorder, or you want them to keep a good reputation. Whatever it is, there are facts to support you.

- ★ *Your values and beliefs inform their decision-making at this age.*
- ★ *Knowing their parents disapprove of underage drinking is a key deterrent for teens and pre-teens, whether they admit it or not.*
- ★ *Check-in with your teens after they've been out, using your parental instincts to check for anything amiss.*

Source: <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/make-a-difference-child-alcohol>

**KEEP
SHOWING
UP**

They're Still Growing Up