

# THE USE AND MISUSE OF ALCOHOL

## *A Personal Survey about Alcohol Use*

*Ask yourself the following questions about alcohol. Just answer “yes” or “no” in your own mind. Your answers are nobody’s concern but your own.*

- 1. Do you ever have a drink because you have problems?*
- 2. Do you drink when you get mad at other people, your friends, or parents?*
- 3. Do you lie to others about your drinking?*
- 4. Do you ever get into trouble when you are drinking?*
- 5. Do you ever start the morning by having a drink?*

If you answer yes to any *one* of these questions, or you know someone who can, maybe it’s time to take a serious look at what alcohol can do to you and others.

### ***Taking a Look at Alcohol***

For thousands of years alcohol has been used in many parts of the world for a variety of reasons. People have been drinking beverages that contain alcohol either as a medicine to ease their aches and pains or as a way to alter their mood. For example, alcohol was once used as an anesthetic to deaden feelings in the body. It was also sometimes used as a tranquilizer to relax and calm a person. Now that there are better medicines than alcohol for these purposes, alcohol is used primarily as a drink in a social situation.

The use of alcohol in our society is accepted by many families and social, business and religious groups. The fact that alcohol is a legal drug for people over the age of 21, however, doesn’t change the fact that it is still a drug.

While signs point to an increase in the amount of alcohol that people of all ages drink, it appears that most people do not know enough about the dangers of alcohol and how it can effect their lives. Nobody is too young (or too old) to have trouble with alcohol. And it doesn’t matter how long these people have been drinking or what they’ve been drinking. *It’s what drinking does to their bodies and minds that counts.*

### ***The Effects of Alcohol***

When consumed, alcohol is a powerful liquid drug that effects the body’s central nervous system. Actually, the word “alcohol” is used to identify **ethyl alcohol**. It is the drug that is found in beer, wine and “hard” liquor such as whiskey, gin and vodka. As a mind-altering drug, alcohol works as a sedative to change the way people think, feel and act.

What happens to the body when alcohol is consumed depends on several factors: the amount of alcohol consumed, the food that’s eaten, body weight, personal experiences in drinking, mood and environment. Basically, here is how alcohol works in the body:

1. Alcohol enters the bloodstream quickly and moves to all parts of **the body**.
2. When the alcohol reaches the brain, it numbs judgment, feelings and muscle coordination control centers. It also affects the circulatory system by causing the surface blood vessels to expand.

## Think Before You Drink

- Alcohol is then broken down by the liver or leaves the body through the lungs and kidneys at a rate of 1/2 ounce per hour.

About one-third of the alcohol is absorbed directly through the stomach wall into the bloodstream. That is why the amount of food in the stomach affects the rate at which the alcohol is absorbed by the body. The more food in the stomach, the slower the absorption of alcohol into the body.

The amount of food in the system and the amount of time it takes to drink alcohol will influence a person's **blood alcohol level**. It takes approximately one hour for the alcohol from one drink (12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1 1/2 ounces of hard liquor) to leave the body.

Drinking alcohol can influence a person's mood and behavior. The more alcohol that is consumed, the greater the changes in feelings and actions. For example, if a person has

<i>a blood alcohol content of:</i>	<i>he or she may:</i>
<b>0.03</b>	• feel mildly relaxed
<b>0.06</b>	• feel mentally tired.
<b>0.09</b>	• show poor judgment or become talkative, noisy or moody.
0.12	• become clumsy and lose some coordination.
0.15	• be very uncoordinated and behave in a way that is typical of drunkenness This is known as <b>intoxication</b> .
<b>0.40</b>	• become completely unconscious and stop breathing.

### *People Who Drink Alcohol*

People who choose to drink alcohol are often classified into three groups, depending on how often they drink:

- **Occasional drinkers.** They usually drink only at celebrations, parties and other special events and usually watch how much alcohol they consume.

- **Social drinkers.** They drink at social events and may have several drinks.
- **Problem drinkers.** They usually drink at any time and can't control their drinking. They don't need a social reason or excuse to drink.

Occasional and social drinkers can be responsible drinkers. As responsible drinkers, they know that two or more drinks can make a driver careless, and so they never drive while they are drinking. They also know that laws don't allow young people to buy or drink alcohol. Most important of all, responsible drinkers know that there is nothing wrong with saying "no thanks" to alcohol, and they respect people who choose not to drink. They realize that urging someone to drink when he or she doesn't want to is impolite, unfair and wrong.

Problem drinkers, on the other hand, can't control their drinking. They often drink when they shouldn't. They may drink before going to work in the morning or they may try to solve their problems by drinking. Unfortunately, alcohol only makes these people feel good for a short period of time. When the alcohol wears off, the problem is still there. *Alcohol does not solve anybody's problems.*

In fact, too much alcohol may make problem drinkers act in ways they normally would not. They may become loud, or angry or even violent. People with drinking problems may also harm themselves, their families and friends and even strangers. If they drive while drinking, for example, they could seriously injure themselves or someone else. But drinking while driving is only one of the many dangers that arise from drinking too much alcohol.

### ***The Dangers of Too Much Alcohol***

Alcohol is a chemical that is fine for some people but deadly for others. For the problem drinkers who drink too much and too often, alcohol can damage not only their bodies but their lives. Although the damage may remain hidden for years, here are some examples of how drinking too much alcohol over a long period of time can affect the body and mind.

#### **Physically,**

- The **liver** may be damaged. **Cirrhosis** of the liver results when heavy drinkers consume alcohol for a long period of time and don't eat the necessary foods the body requires.
- The **respiratory** system is affected by the normal process of alcohol breakdown. About two percent of the alcohol that a person drinks leaves the body through the lungs and kidneys.
- The **circulatory system** is also affected by alcohol. It causes the surface blood vessels to expand. The skin feels warm and becomes pink in color. The blood loses heat to the environment through the skin. The drinker feels warm, but the deep body temperature is lowered. If the drinker is exposed to cold in this condition, serious damage may occur.
- The **digestive system** may be at greater risk of getting ulcers in the stomach and cancer in the mouth, throat and stomach.

- The **heart** is at greater risk of becoming diseased, and the heavy drinker increases his or her chances of having a heart attack.
- The **brain** tissue can be destroyed. Once that happens, the tissue cannot be replaced.

In addition, malnutrition may occur because the heavy drinker doesn't eat nutritious foods. He or she makes drinking alcohol more important than eating good food, and the result could be a vitamin deficiency. Even those who show no signs of poor nutrition show other signs of ill health. The general tone of their tissues often becomes poor. Their muscles tend to become flabby, and their skin turns blotchy.

**Mentally**, a person who drinks too much alcohol may also experience

- **Blackouts**— The heavy drinker may not remember what happened while he or she was intoxicated.
- **Hallucinations**— A person who drinks a lot may hear voices or see things that aren't there.
- **Loss of good judgment**— As brain cells become damaged, a person's ability to learn and decide right from wrong can decrease.
- **Personality changes**— Heavy drinkers can begin to lose touch with the real world around them. They can become tense, angry and shut off everything around them. Eventually they may be unable to deal with the demands of life.

When people drink too much all the time or they don't seem to be able to control their drinking and become drunk again and again, they have a problem with alcohol. In all likelihood, they have a disease known as alcoholism.

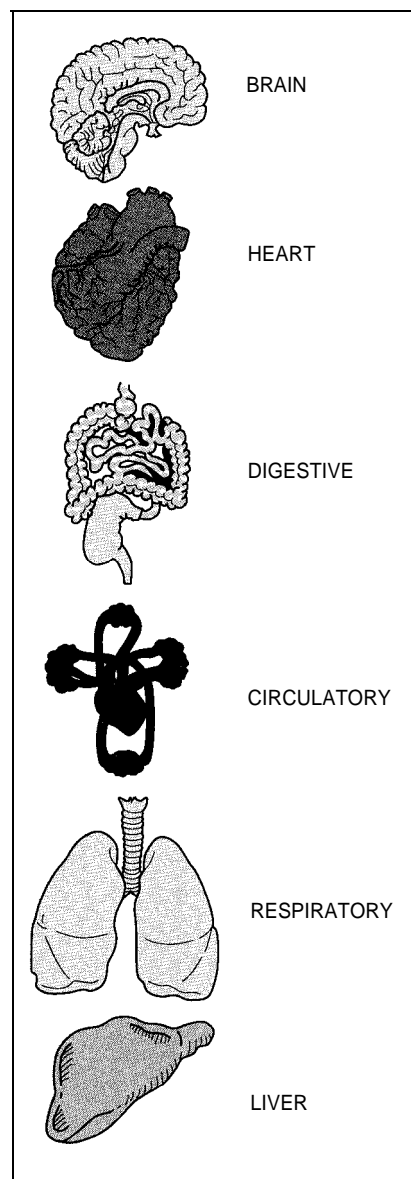
### **A Disease Called Alcoholism**

*"My name is Sarah, and my mother is an alcoholic. I am fifteen years old and fed up with her drinking. I go out as much as I can just to get out of the house. The minute I am eighteen, I want to leave and get my own apartment."*

*"My name is Tim, and my father is an alcoholic. When I brought my friends home with me after school one day, my father was drunk and gave me a real hard time. If I can't bring any friends home, how can I have any real close friends?"*

Your mother drinks too much. Your dad drinks too much. Or maybe it's someone you know who drinks too much and you don't know why. You hear the words "alcoholic" or "alcoholism." You don't know exactly what these words mean, but you know you feel uneasy when you hear them.

While you may not know what alcoholism means, you do know what happens when someone drinks too much alcohol. You probably feel unhappy and confused. So let's look at these words, what they mean and how they can affect your life.



**Alcoholism** is a disease that results from the excessive use of alcohol. **Alcoholics** are people who are addicted to alcohol and have lost control over the amount of alcohol they drink. Most alcoholics start out with the same intentions as social drinkers: they plan to have a drink or two. But while the social drinkers can stop drinking when they choose to stop, alcoholics cannot. If they stop drinking alcohol, they usually feel terrible because their bodies have become dependent on it.

Who, exactly, is an alcoholic? That question is a tricky one because symptoms are not always clear cut, and even doctors do not agree on a definition of the disease. The extreme cases are obvious. A person in the grip of alcoholism blacks out from drinking too much, suffers memory loss and wakes up trembling with a craving for another drink. The behavior of alcoholics can also fluctuate wildly. Some drink heavily every day, while others can stop for brief periods, only to go off on binges. If a person experiences trouble while drinking with family, friends or law enforcement, then the person has a drinking problem.

Many people think alcoholics lack any form of will power or are bums who will end up on the streets. But anyone can be an alcoholic—men, women, businessmen, laborers, housewives and children. It doesn't matter what age a person is, the color of his or her skin or the amount of money he or she has.

What causes alcoholism? While scientists are not sure, they have some pretty good ideas. Some experts feel that alcoholism is the result of a chemical reaction that occurs when alcohol enters a person's body. Others believe that people become alcoholics because their body lacks the ability to handle alcohol. They become intoxicated after very few drinks. Still others believe alcoholism results from the influence of others. For example, if a person belongs to a group of friends who drink a lot, he or she may, too.

Medical research has been able to confirm the link between heredity and alcoholism. When there is one alcoholic in a family, usually it's possible to find many more in the family background. It's not that a person is born an alcoholic, but evidence seems to support the theory that some people are more likely to become alcoholics because of their heredity. Once they start drinking, they run a greater risk of developing the disease.

Most alcoholics experience many of the physical and emotional problems of the problem drinker. Since many adult alcoholics are married and have children, members of the immediate family often suffer, too. Studies show that children of alcoholics are often neglected, beaten or abused. Because alcohol is expensive, much of an alcoholic's earnings may be spent on purchasing it instead of purchasing necessary food and clothing. In addition, because an alcoholic often has trouble getting a job or keeping one, the family may not have the money it needs to survive.

The important thing to realize is that *alcoholism is nobody's "fault."* No one can be blamed for alcoholism. It is not the alcoholic person's fault or anyone else's. Being an alcoholic doesn't mean that the person doesn't have any willpower.

### ***Treatment for Alcoholism***

Fortunately, there is treatment available for the disease of alcoholism. It may involve individual or group counseling, or it may involve a period of hospitalization to help the alcoholic regain his/her physical health.

An alcoholic's recovery generally consists of four phases:

**First**, the alcoholic's realization that he/she has a problem with alcohol and that help is available.

**Second**, he/she begins to share life with the family again and leaves the isolation that accompanied his/her bout with alcoholism.

**Third**, he/she becomes aware of the kind of thinking and emotional reactions that have pressured him/her to use alcohol.

**Fourth**, he/she gains confidence in the ability to work.

These four phases can take anywhere from one month to two years. While the disease can be successfully treated, the disease itself never goes away. A person who is an alcoholic will always be an alcoholic. With treatment, however, alcoholics can learn how to live normal, healthy lives.

One organization that has been very successful over the past few decades in treating alcoholics is **Alcoholics Anonymous**. Since 1956, treatment centers have been opened throughout the United States and throughout the world to provide care for people who suffer from alcoholism.

There are also groups available to help members of an alcoholic's family. **Al-Anon** is for husbands, wives or relatives of alcoholics. The organization teaches family members what to expect and how to handle any problems that might arise from living with an alcoholic. **Alateen** is a special group for teenagers who have an alcoholic in their family. This group helps people understand the problems of alcoholics. It also gives them the chance to express their feelings about what it's like to live with an alcoholic.

In addition, there may be other organizations in the community that will provide information and/or counseling on alcohol and the problems

**Alateen is an organization that helps teenagers understand and cope with the problems of alcoholics.**

<p>Alateen is an organization that is devoted to helping teenage children of alcoholics. It's purpose is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• help teens understand what alcoholism is all about.</li> <li>• help teens face problems that come from living with an alcoholic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• give teens an opportunity to talk with others about their experiences in dealing with an alcoholic.</li> <li>• show teenagers different ways to deal with their own special problems.</li> </ul>
<p><i>You may have a drinking problem and become an alcoholic if you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>are hung over after every party;</i></li> <li>• <i>drink to prepare for a tough exam, a game or a party;</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>constantly do things under the influence of alcohol that cause you to feel embarrassed or result in trouble.</i></li> </ul>

it can cause. If you look in the yellow pages of your telephone book under “alcoholism” or “counselors”, you will find the names of people and agencies that can help. Give them a call if you need help.

### ***Other Dangers of Alcohol Use***

Two additional dangers associated with the use of alcohol are drinking and driving and the consumption of alcohol while using other drugs. When these two are combined, people put themselves and others in a position that could cause serious injury or damage—and in some instances, death.

**Drinking and Driving** It is a fact that:

- *At least one-half of all drivers who have been involved in automobile accidents where someone dies have been drinking.*
- *More than 22,000 people will die this year in alcohol-related deaths.*
- *It is against the law to drive while under the influence of alcohol.*

Statistics show that the number of traffic deaths blamed on alcohol is increasing every year. As a result, communities around the country are joining in a “movement” to change the drinking habits of our nation’s drivers. Laws have also been passed to severely punish people who drink and drive.

Even with these actions, however, statistics show that the number of traffic deaths blamed on alcohol are increasing every year. ***DON'T BECOME A STATISTIC!*** *Never ride with someone who has been drinking. Call your parents or a friend to pick you up. Walk, or take a bus. Stay put until you can get a safe ride home. And if you decide to drink when you become of legal age, don't drive after drinking. Remember,*

Susan is 15 years old and lives with her parents, two older brothers and two younger sisters. Her name has been changed, but her story has not. Susan is an alcoholic.

The first time Susan drank alcohol she was twelve years old. She and a girlfriend drank some beer from her parents' refrigerator. Although Susan's friend hated the taste and quit after a few sips, Susan kept on drinking. "I got high real fast," she says. "I loved the feeling."

Soon after her first experience, Susan began going to parties with her older friends. Sometimes someone would bring beer, and sometimes the parents would provide it. "It's amazing," Susan now says, "how many people do not consider alcohol a drug. So many parents say, 'I don't care if you drink. I just don't want you to use drugs.' "

Throughout the ninth grade, Susan continued to drink. But she also continued to do well in school, so her parents had no idea anything was wrong. Then Susan began hanging around with a new crowd of friends—the heavy drug users. During the summer between her ninth and tenth grades, Susan went to a lot of parties with older kids. "Drinking made me feel more at ease with myself and more at home in this crowd," she says. When school began in the fall, Susan's grades dropped drastically, and she quit the volleyball team she'd been so excited about. Her parents were surprised and upset by these changes, and they talked with her teachers about her. The teachers were also concerned. But none of them had noticed any signs of drug use on Susan.

Although she wouldn't have admitted it to anyone, Susan was feeling steadily worse. Only alcohol meant something to her. "I was starting to hate school," she says. Each day she went to school early enough to get high before classes. She usually smoked pot so that no one would smell liquor on

her breath. After school, she'd get high again. Susan was like many teenagers. She wasn't addicted to just one drug. The goal of the drug dependent person is to get high, and alcohol is only one of many drugs used.

It wasn't until a few months after Susan entered high school that her record was brought to the attention of a counselor. The counselor made no attempt to lecture, punish or frighten Susan. She just gave Susan factual information about drug dependency. Susan looked bored and denied she had a drug problem.

When a meeting was called so that all the people who were concerned with Susan's welfare could talk to her about her drug problem, Susan was surprised. She was especially surprised to see her parents at school. At first she denied any drug use. By the end of the meeting, however, she admitted that she drank, but she also continued to deny that she had a problem.

Because her parents noticed little change in Susan's behavior in the following weeks, they felt it was necessary to place her in one of the local treatment centers for chemically dependent teenagers. During her first five weeks of treatment, she attended lectures on chemical dependency and talked endlessly with other kids in the program. She also attended group therapy sessions twice a day to deal with her feelings.

But treatment was only about ten percent of recovery. Susan still has a lot of growing to go through. Today Susan is a very different young woman. She knows she is chemically dependent and will be for the rest of her life. She can never take a drink or any type of mood-altering drug. She is back in school, catching up on missed credits, and building a whole new network of friends. It's not always easy, but she's doing it.



## *Breath Alcohol Content and Its Effects*

Drinks** in Body	Approximate Breath Alcohol Concentration (in Grams*)								Effects on feeling and behavior	Effects on driving ability
	100	120	140	160	180	200	220	240		
1	.04	.03	.03	.03	.02	.02	.02	.02	Absence of observable effects. Mild alteration of feelings, slight intensification of existing moods.	Mild changes. Most drivers seem a bit moody. Bad driving habits slightly pronounced.
2	.08	.06	.05	.05	.04	.04	.03	.03		
3	.11	.09	.08	.07	.06	.06	.05	.05		
4	.15	.12	.11	.09	.08	.08	.07	.06	Feeling of relaxation. Mild sedation. Exaggeration of emotions and behavior. Slight impairment of motor skills. Increase in reaction time.	Drivers take too long to decide and act. Motor skills (such as braking) are impaired. Reaction time is increased.
5	.19	.16	.13	.12	.11	.09	.09	.08		
6	.23	.19	.16	.14	.13	.11	.10	.09		
7	.26	.22	.19	.16	.15	.13	.12	.11	Difficulty performing gross motor skills. Uncoordinated behavior. Definite impairment of mental abilities, judgment, and memory.	Judgment seriously affected. Physical and mental coordination impaired. Physical difficulty in driving a vehicle.
8	.30	.25	.21	.19	.17	.15	.14	.13		
9	.34	.28	.24	.21	.19	.17	.15	.14		
10	.38	.31	.27	.23	.21	.19	.17	.16	Major impairment of all physical and mental functions. Irresponsible behavior. Euphoria. Some difficulty standing, walking, and talking.	Distortion of all perception and judgment. Driving erratic. Driver in a daze.
11		.40	.34	.30	.27	.24	.22	.20		
12			.38	.33	.29	.26	.24	.22		
13			.40	.36	.32	.29	.26	.24		
14				.38	.34	.31	.28	.26		
15					.37	.33	.30	.28	At .40, most people have passed out. Hospitalization is probable at BACs of .40 and above, and death is imminent.	It is hoped that the driver passed out before trying to get into a vehicle.

\*Alcohol concentration is expressed here as grams of alcohol per 210 liters of breath. A reading of ".10" on a breath-testing machine indicates 10 one-hundredths (10/100) grams of alcohol per 210 liters of breath.

\*\*A drink is defined as: 1.5 oz. of 80 proof liquor or 12 oz. of beer or 5 oz. of table wine.

Source: National Safety Council

when you become of legal age, don't drive after drinking. Remember, it's your life.

**Drinking Alcohol While Using Other Drugs** Many people are unaware of the synergistic effect when alcohol is used in combination with other drugs. For example, barbiturates are depressants or sedatives that are often prescribed by a doctor to help people fall asleep or calm their nerves. If they drink alcohol along with a small amount of barbiturates, it can knock them out cold—or even kill them—because the alcohol magnifies the way barbiturates act in the body many times over. Alcohol also multiplies the effects of drugs such as heroin, methadone

## Drinking while driving can have deadly consequences.

and mild tranquilizers and can do the same thing to over-the-counter drugs such as cold, hay fever and asthma medications.

In addition, combining alcohol with any of these may also speed up any addiction a person might have to them. The point to remember is *DON'T MIX ALCOHOL WITH ANY OTHER DRUGS*. A better point is don't drink alcohol or do other drugs!

### *Mistaken Ideas about Alcohol*

There are lots of mistaken ideas about alcohol. Have you ever heard any of these:

- **“A can of beer or glass of wine has less alcohol than a mixed drink.”**

*NOT TRUE.* The average-sized glass of wine or a can of beer has just as much alcohol as an average drink made with hard liquor.

- **“People who drink a lot have self-control.”**

*NOT TRUE.* In truth, people who drink a lot often lose control. Some people may drink a lot to show off, but this doesn't mean they can handle it.

- **“Alcohol gives you energy.”**

*NOT TRUE.* Alcohol, as you have learned, is a depressant that slows down the body and mind.

<b><i>DUI and DWI</i></b>	Two common terms that refer to drinking while driving are “DUI” and “DWI”. DUI stands for “Driving while under the influence of alcoholic beverages, model glue, or	controlled substances. DWI stands for driving while intoxicated. Both are unlawful, and anyone who is convicted of these charges shall be punished.
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- **“Mixing drinks will make a person more drunk.”**  
*NOT TRUE.* Whether or not a person gets drunk depends on the total amount of alcohol he or she drinks, how fast it is consumed and several other factors. It has nothing to do with the kind of drinks that are made.
- **“Drinking is what makes a party fun.”**  
*NOT TRUE.* *You* don’t need alcohol to have a good time at a party. There are many ways to have fun with friends at a party.
- **“A cold shower or black coffee will sober a drunk person up.”**  
*NOT TRUE.* Only time (about one hour per drink) will sober up a person who has had too much to drink. Fresh air, coffee, or a cold shower may help to keep a person awake, but these factors won’t sober him or her up faster.
- **“Mixing alcohol with other drugs won’t hurt you.”**  
*NOT TRUE.* It is very dangerous to use alcohol with other drugs. In some cases, it can even result in death. This causes the synergistic effect.

### ***Teenagers Who Use Alcohol***

Teenagers today may decide to try alcohol for a variety of reasons. They see adults drinking at home, in restaurants, at parties or on TV, and they want to be like them. Many teens feel a lot of pressure to drink from their friends, and it is often hard to resist the rest of the group. Sometimes teens decide to drink alcohol just because they are curious about what it will be like. They may see their friends get “high” on alcohol, and they wonder what it feels like.

But alcohol can be especially dangerous for teenagers. Here’s why:

- **Alcohol can interfere with personal growth and development.** If teenagers drink a lot, they may not eat the right kinds of foods their growing body needs. Alcohol only has calories-no protein, vitamins or minerals.
- **Alcohol can slow the body down.** Those who drink too much get tired and sick more often and as a result can’t do their best in school, sports or work.
- **Alcohol can add stress to a teen’s life.** They may drink to try to escape problems at home, school or with friends, but alcohol doesn’t solve problems. It may only make them a lot worse.
- **Alcohol can affect feelings.** Teenagers may find alcohol makes them feel happy and silly, but it can also make them feel sad, angry or frustrated. In addition, drinking too much alcohol may also make them lose their self-respect and the respect of others.
- **Alcohol can affect behavior.** Alcohol can make teens do things they’ll regret. They may overreact or lose control while drinking too much. For example, it may make them argue with a friend or do dangerous things to put their life in jeopardy.
- **Alcohol can make teens intoxicated more easily.** Because they weigh less and have less blood than adults do, alcohol has a greater effect on their body, and they can become intoxicated more easily.
- **Alcohol is illegal for teenagers.** People under the legal drinking age of 21 who buy or drink alcohol can get in trouble with the law.

## ***Handle Your Choice Wisely***

Whether you drink alcohol or not when you reach 21 years of age, the important thing is to make your choice maturely and wisely. You may find it a big help if you discuss drinking with others. At home, talk honestly with your parents about how people use alcohol in your family—when and why. When you talk with your friends about drinking, think for yourself. You don't have to go along with what everyone else is doing if you know it is wrong. And if necessary, try to help your friends whose families have alcohol problems. Listen to their problems, and urge them to get help.

**If you choose to drink**, know about the risks of drinking alcohol and how it can affect your good health. Most important of all, respect non-drinkers. Don't tease them or try to get them to drink. In fact, you might want to try going without alcohol yourself when you're with them.

**If you choose not to drink**, believe in yourself and stand up to the pressures from your friends or "the crowd" to drink. Don't feel you have to apologize for not drinking. Just say "no thanks" casually, but firmly. You don't have to give excuses or explanations. Sometimes it helps to make plans to do things where alcohol won't be a part of the entertainment, such as dances, movies, or sports.

It's all up to you . . .

- *to understand* the facts and dangers of drinking alcohol;
- *to decide* if you are going to drink or not;
- *to learn* to handle alcohol wisely and responsibly if you do drink; and
- *to obey the laws*, especially those against drinking and driving (the #1 killer of teenagers).

Always remember, it's smart not to drink. You can choose not to drink! It's all up to you.

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Alcohol is a drug that has many dangerous side effects. It can have serious physical, mental and emotional effects on your life. It is also related to many fatal accidents.

Nobody is too young or too old to have trouble with alcohol. People who lose control over their drinking are called alcoholics. Alcoholism is more than a problem. It is a disease that needs to be treated. There are several groups that can offer help to alcoholics and their families. Fortunately, the problem can be treated.

Your decision about drinking should be based on knowledge about alcohol and knowledge about yourself. It is also important for you to make your decision maturely and wisely. Be smart—don't drink!

## ***Summary***

