



Making the Link

Underage Drinking and Risky Behavior

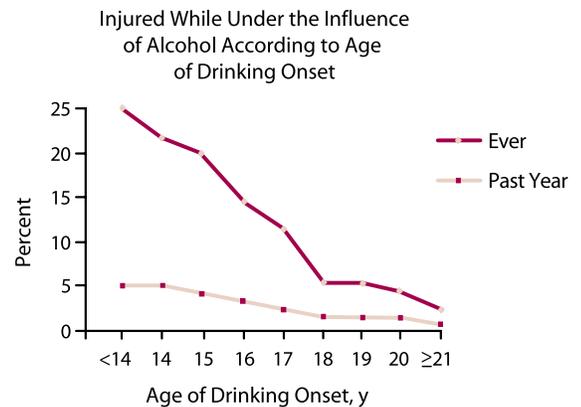
A national survey reported that 13 percent of youths, aged 12 to 17, had at least one serious alcohol problem related to drinking in the past year.¹

Underage drinking is linked to an increase in risky sexual behavior.

- According to a national survey of sexually active young people, 12 percent of teens aged 15 to 17 reported having unprotected sex as a result of having been drinking or using drugs. In addition, 24 percent reported that because of their substance use, they had “done more” sexually than they had planned.²
- Teenage girls who are heavy drinkers are five times more likely than nondrinkers to engage in sexual intercourse and a third less likely to use condoms, which can result in pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.³

Underage drinking is linked to an increased risk of fatalities and unintentional injuries.

- In 2000, youths aged 12 to 17 who reported past year alcohol use (19.6 percent) were more likely than youths who did not use alcohol (8.6 percent) to be at risk for suicide.⁴
- Young drinking drivers are involved in fatal crashes at twice the rate of drivers aged 21 and older.⁵
- Early age of onset drinking may be an indicator of increased risk of alcohol-related injury. Those who start drinking before age 14 are 12 times more likely to be injured while under the influence of alcohol sometime in their life.⁶



No. of Respondents
 130 845 1507 3155 2861 5693 2213 2078 7315

P < .001 for comparison of association between age of drinking onset and percentage engaging in each outcome

Source: Hingson, et al. 2000.

Early initiation is linked to future alcohol use and dependency problems.

- According to a longitudinal study of students in three States, middle school students were almost three times more likely to use alcohol if they had previously used alcohol in elementary school.⁷
- If drinking is delayed until age 21, a child’s risk of serious alcohol related problems is decreased by 70 percent.⁸

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Household Survey on Drug Abuse Population Estimates 1998, Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Mental Health and Human Services, 1999.
² Kaiser Family Foundation. Survey Snapshot: Substance Use and Risky Sexual Behavior: Attitudes and Practices Among Adolescents and Young Adults. Menlo Park CA: The Henry J. Kaiser Foundation, 2002.
³ The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. Substance Abuse and the American Woman. New York: Columbia University, June 1996.
⁴ Office of Applied Studies. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. NHSDA Report: Substance Use and the Risk of Suicide Among Youths. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2002.
⁵ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). 2000 Youth Fatal Crash and Alcohol Facts. Washington, DC: US Department of Transportation, 2001.
⁶ Hingson RW, Heeren T, Jamaka A, et al. Age of drinking onset and unintentional injury involvement after drinking. JAMA 284(12):1527-1533, 2000.
⁷ Wilson N, Battistich V, Syme L, et al. Does elementary alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use increase middle school risk? J Adolesc Health 30(6):442-447, 2002.
⁸ Grant BF, Dawson DA. Age at onset of alcohol use and association with DSM-IV alcohol abuse and dependence: Results from the National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic Survey. J Subst Abuse 9:103-110, 1997.

- Initiative Partners**
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIH)
 - The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
 - Office of Research on Women’s Health (NIH)
 - National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIH)
 - Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DOJ)
 - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (DHHS)
 - National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (DOT)