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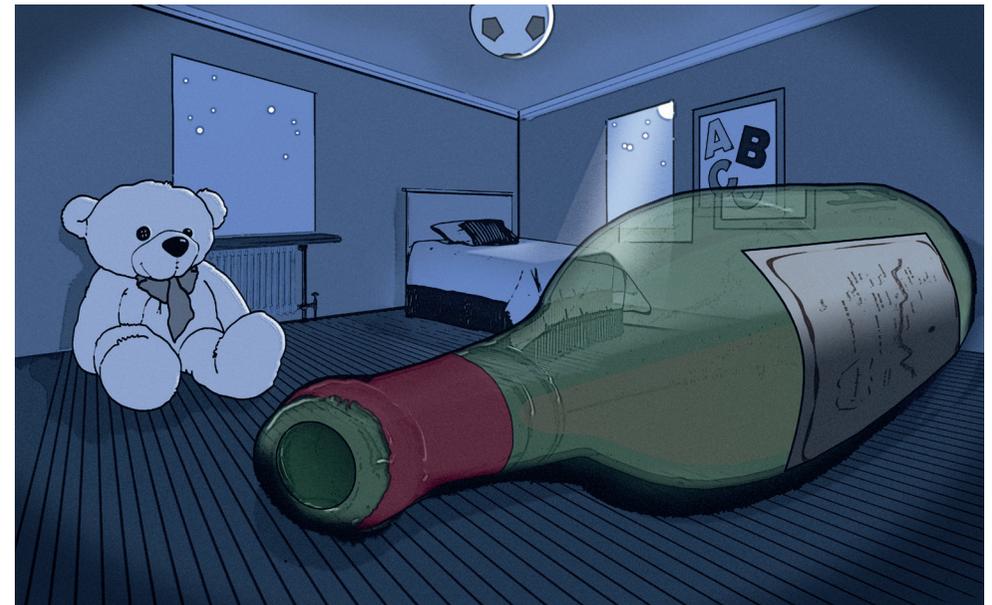
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Source: Think Again/Public Health Agency of Sweden



IMPORTANT DECISIONS AND DIFFICULT CHOICES

About Young People and Alcohol



HOW DO YOUNG PEOPLE GET HOLD OF ALCOHOL?

It's relatively easy for young people to get hold of alcohol, even though not a lot of parents buy it for their children. The most common way to get hold of alcohol is through older friends or siblings.

WHY IS DRINKING DANGEROUS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

Young people's brains are more fragile than adults', as the brain keeps developing until you're around 25 years old. The risk of becoming dependent also increases if you start drinking when you're young rather than when you're older. Since alcohol impairs your judgment, it's particularly difficult to control your behaviour and feelings if you've been drinking.

INJURIES AND RISKS

Young people run a greater risk of getting into trouble in connection with alcohol consumption than adults, be it acute alcohol poisoning or injuries caused by accidents or assaults. Alcohol is involved in eight out of ten violent crimes; most commonly, the perpetrator is under the influence of alcohol, but in half the cases this applies to the victim as well. Having alcohol in the picture can also lead to problems in terms of relationships with friends or a partner. You might start arguing, or have sex even though you don't want to when under the influence of alcohol.

CONNECTION BETWEEN ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND DRUGS

Teenagers who smoke or use chewing tobacco can become dependent even if they don't use tobacco every day. There are also facts pointing to nicotine affecting the brain, which means that tobacco users run a greater risk of succumbing to alcohol or drug abuse. Most people who try drugs do it when they've drunk alcohol. By keeping young people away from alcohol, you're also largely protecting them from drugs.

WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY?

Selling or giving alcohol to anyone under the age of 20 is not allowed. To buy alcohol at a restaurant, you have to be 18; this rule applies to medium strength beer (folköl) as well. If you supply an underage person with alcohol, you are committing a crime, and the penalty for peddling or unlawful selling of alcohol is a fine or prison for up to four years.

WHAT CAN ADULTS DO?

How adults act matters. If an adult buys alcohol for an underage person, they're showing that it's ok to drink alcohol even though you're not an adult. If parents and other adults are consistent in their attitude and say no to alcohol, there are positive results. Research has shown that parents who make their position clear when it comes to alcohol for young people under the age of 18 contribute to the young people delaying their alcohol debut and drinking less.

WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY

Young people start drinking later and later, thus delaying their alcohol debut or saying no to alcohol altogether. On average, young people are close to 17 years old when they try alcohol for the first time; ten years ago, that age was 13 – 14. One reason is that parents' attitudes are more restrained when it comes to alcohol and young people. Another reason may be that young people socialise in a different way.

WHAT YOU AS A PARENT OF A TEENAGER/ADULT CAN THINK ABOUT

(Tips from Think Again)

- Talk to other parents about parties, alcohol, home times, etc.
- Never give your teenager alcohol or buy it for them – it signals that you think it's ok for your child to drink.
- Show that you care. Explain what you are afraid might happen if your child were to drink alcohol.
- Stand your ground. Teenagers expect parents to give them boundaries.
- Remember – teenagers care a lot about what their parents say.