

Respect Yourself - Stay in control



Information for Young People

## Why let drink decide?

Alcohol leaves you vulnerable. It's a fact. Sometimes when you've been drinking you do things you don't really want to, or certainly wouldn't do if you could decide for yourself.

Did you know that 10,000 young people, most of them under 16, are admitted to hospital every year because of drinking? Accidents and injuries are much more likely when alcohol is involved.

Alcohol can take all sorts of decisions away from you. One in seven 16 - 24 year olds have unprotected sex after drinking alcohol.

More and more young people are choosing not to drink. The health advice is that young people should not drink alcohol before they are 15, and the healthiest option is not to drink until you are 18.

You need to know the facts about alcohol so you can make the right choices for yourself. Otherwise, you're in danger of doing something you'll regret.



## You don't have to drink

Remember that not all young people drink alcohol. In fact, more and more young people are choosing not to drink at all.

If you're out with friends and they are drinking, you might feel pressured to join in. Simply be confident with people and say that you are not drinking. You don't have to explain yourself or lie. But it's just as well to have a few good reasons prepared:

- You might have to keep a clear head for a test at school.
- You might need to stay in shape for sports, particularly if you've got a game coming up.
- Say that you're feeling unwell and don't want to make it any worse.
- If you are taking medication, you should not drink alcohol.
- Say that your parents won't let you drink.
- Don't be afraid to say that you prefer soft drinks and don't like the taste of alcohol – many people, including many adults, are like this.
- You could always pour yourself a soft drink and let other people assume it contains alcohol.

**What would be more embarrassing, turning down a drink or being known as the person who can't handle their drink**

## Did you know?

- The younger you start drinking, the more chance you have of getting liver and heart problems.
- There are between 160 - 228 calories in a bottle of alcopops (275ml).

## Think before you drink

If you do drink, there are some simple precautions you can take to cut the risk of coming to harm:

- Eat before you drink because alcohol will enter the bloodstream more slowly through your stomach if there is food there to absorb it.
- Before you start drinking any alcohol at all, be clear how much you want to drink and when you're going to stop.
- Make sure you drink soft drinks in between alcoholic drinks – this will stop you becoming too dehydrated.
- Try to have standard-sized drinks so you have a better understanding of how many units of alcohol you are consuming.
- If you go out and drink, make sure you know how you're going to get home and always have some money put aside for a taxi in case you need it.
- Always tell someone where you're going if you're going out and think you'll be drinking.

## Look after your health

- If you do drink, only do it now and again – and certainly don't do it more than once a week.
- If you do drink, never consume more than the recommended daily number of units for adults (which is 3–4 units a day for men and 2–3 units a day for women).
- If you do drink, make sure there is a responsible adult present to reduce the risk of harm.

## Staying SAFE

If you're going out for the night, there are some simple things you can do to reduce the risk of falling into harm's way:

### **S**ay where you're going

- Tell your parents or carers as well as your friends where you're going, and when you are coming home

### **A**gree how you're getting home

- Plan your night before you go out
- Keep money aside so you can get home
- Have a number for a trusted taxi company with you before you go out
- If you take a taxi, make sure it's licensed
- Never get into a car if you know the driver has been drinking.

### **F**ind help

- Avoid aggressive people and walk away from someone who wants a fight
- Don't be shy of talking to a police officer if you feel threatened
- Don't be afraid to step in if you think one of your friends has had too much to drink – if you're worried about them find a responsible adult or call an ambulance

### **E**veryone counts

- Keep close to at least one friend
- Never leave one of your friends out alone



## Further information

You're always going to face tough decisions when you're young. Alcohol makes it harder to make the right choices.

Make yourself aware of the risks before you touch alcohol. You wouldn't let someone else take these decisions for you. Why let drink decide?

For more information please visit:

**[www.warwickshire.gov.uk/alcohol](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/alcohol)**

**[www.respectyourself.info](http://www.respectyourself.info)**

**If you are concerned about your own drinking or a friend's drinking please call Warwickshire Young Persons Substance Misuse Service on freephone 08000 887248**

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