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News you can Use

Alcohol Affects A Teen's Brain and Future

It's a fact: alcohol affects a developing brain differently than an adults. According to the American Medical Association (2003) "the brain goes through dynamic changes during adolescence, and alcohol can seriously damage long and short term growth processes."

- Children who begin drinking at age 13 have a 45% chance of becoming alcohol dependent; the person who starts drinking at 21 only has a 7% chance of becoming dependent.
- Kids have not developed the "cut off" switch that makes a drinker sleep or pass out from excess alcohol — leading to consumption of dangerous amounts before realizing they are in trouble.
- Alcohol poisoning can cause difficulty breathing, unconsciousness, and death.
- Alcohol rewires the brain's reward system, which can lead to alcohol addiction. The brain can learn that alcohol is a good thing.

- The brain's hippocampus is responsible for learning and memory. This area can be 10% smaller in underage drinkers. That is a significant difference.
- Alcohol is a depressant, it slows or shuts down brain activity, deletes or distorts neural messages, and damages neuro-connections.
- Studies show kids are more at risk for alcohol use from 3-6pm, when parents are typically still at work.

Parent Resources: Underage Alcohol Use is Not Acceptable

Begin talking to your child before age 8, it is not too early. Some local youth begin drinking in the sixth grade. If you have older children, it is also never too late to begin the conversations. Talk early and talk often - check out these resources for additional facts and tips.

- A Parent's guide to the teen brain: www.drugfree.org/teenbrain/index.html
- www.theantidrug.com
- www.alcoholfreechildren.org
- www.badpc.org

You can do this, you are not alone! Parents who support one another in preventing underage drinking are true heroes!

Sources: Utah's *Deseret News* Newspapers in Education; American Medical Association Fact Sheet, 2003.

Barrington Area Drug Prevention Coalition
www.badpc.org

HERE in Barrington — Help • Encouragement • Resources • Education — to promote positive mental health

Join the **Barrington Area Drug Prevention Coalition** and the **H.E.R.E. in Barrington** coalition in strengthening the health and wellness of our community, family and our self. For more information on specific steps to take or how to get involved, visit www.badpc.org or www.hereinbarrington.org.