

Alcohol alert

Even if your child is way below the legal drinking age, it is never too early to ask questions and find out how you can raise your child to be alcohol-free or, at least, a responsible drinker in future

Parents: to drink or not to drink

You will probably face social situations whereby drinks are offered to you during celebrations and happy occasions. It is up to you to make a call whether to pick up that glass of alcohol and if you do, to determine how much to drink. Do bear in mind that your child could be present and might ask what you are drinking.

Make an informed choice

Alcohol can affect the brain and cause changes to a person's mood and behaviour. This can cause uninhibited behaviour — a person may lose control of his emotions or behaviour, or engage in dangerous activities. For some, drinking alcohol can also lead to violent behaviour.





Binge drinking is defined as having more than four alcoholic drinks on one occasion for males and more than three drinks for females. Short term effects of binge drinking include getting drunk, nausea and vomiting, blurred or double vision and hangovers. If very large amounts of alcohol are consumed, binge drinking can lead to alcohol poisoning and death.

Long term consequences of heavy and frequent drinking include alcohol addiction, malnutrition, liver disease, brain damage, stomach cancer, kidney damage and erectile dysfunction.

Do not forget, if you choose to drink at home, avoid drinking beyond the recommended limits for men and women. For tips on responsible drinking, log on to www.hpb.gov.sg.

Set a healthy example

Is it all right to drink in front of my child? Just a sip of alcohol would not hurt, would it?

As a parent, you want to be a positive role model for your child. If you choose to drink, avoid drinking in front of your child.

Studies have shown that children who have witnessed their parents drinking or being drunk have a greater risk of drinking during their teenage years compared to children who have not been exposed to such behaviour.

Keep them informed about the dangers

Did you know that children can be influenced by alcohol from a very young age? Reports have found that children as young as three years old could develop opinions about alcohol and cigarettes.

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Such attitudes about alcohol use become increasingly positive as they get older. By the age of 10, most children associate drinking with being liked by peers, feeling good and having increased confidence.

To prevent your child from drinking at a young age and/or having drinking problems in future, it is important to communicate openly with him.

Some tips on keeping your child alcohol free

You may wish to adapt the following suggestions to suit your family values and cultural circumstances.

- Keep alcohol inaccessible to your child at home.
- Read about the effects of drinking alcohol so that you can teach your child the right facts.
- Keep the lines of communication open. Use real-life incidents to help explain the facts about alcohol. For example, when someone is seen drinking or if an alcohol advertisement appears on TV, take the opportunity to discuss the facts of alcohol abuse with your child.
- Offer non-alcoholic drinks at parties and other social events instead. Show your child that you do not need alcohol to have fun.

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Who needs alcohol to have fun?

Dizzy catwalk

This is one activity you can do with your child to let him experience how alcohol consumption can affect one's balance and coordination.

You will need:

- A baseball bat or stick which is slightly shorter than your child
- A roll of masking tape

You can demonstrate this to your child first before letting him try it:

Step 1: Using the masking tape, prepare a straight line about 1-2 metres in length.

Step 2: At one end of the line, hold the bat or stick upright.

Step 3: Bend down, and rest your child's forehead on the top of the stick.

Step 4: Keep his head down and spin him around the stick 10-15 times.

Step 5: Encourage him to walk in a straight path along the line!





Myth buster

Debunk marketing myths about alcohol. Use these talking points with your child when alcohol advertisements are screened on TV.

Four Myths Alcohol Advertisers Want Us to Believe	Four Myth Busters!
Alcohol is a magic potion that can transform you.	What the alcohol advertisements do not show is how alcohol can also make people lose control of their emotions or behaviour. This is because alcohol affects the brain and causes changes to a person's mood and behaviour.
Sports and alcohol go hand-in-hand.	Although there are sports events and players who are sponsored (paid) by alcohol companies, the truth is that drinking alcohol can cause someone to run slower or not jump as high! In fact, it can also affect one's muscle growth.
Drinking is a risk-free and fun activity.	While every alcohol advertisement will show that drinking is safe and fun, we should be aware of what they do not show — for example, the vomiting, getting into fights, accidents when one is drunk.
You cannot survive without drinking.	Advertisers want you to believe that alcohol is important to a great party or outing with your friends. However, there are many ways to have fun without alcohol. Be it swimming or other sports activities, shopping, watching a good movie, or just playing with your friends. The truth is all these activities are so much more fun without alcohol!

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