

# NOW IS A GREAT TIME TO TALK WITH KIDS ABOUT ALCOHOL – HERE ARE SOME TIPS

DRUG FREE  
COMMUNITIES

of Fond du Lac

## SMALL TALKS

Small talks about underage drinking can make a big difference in a kid's choices. That's because kids really do listen. Research shows having frequent, casual conversations about alcohol, **starting around age 8, can be a lot more effective**—and a lot less intimidating—than one super serious discussion. **So, keep talking and give a kid the confidence to grow up alcohol-free.**



### What to do

#### Keep it casual

No fancy script or setting required. Just think about what you want to share and take advantage of the one-on-one moments.

#### Be prepared

You may hear things you do not expect or like very much. Try taking a few deep breaths and keep listening.

#### No answer? Don't panic

It's okay to admit when you need to learn more. Remember, you don't have to discuss everything at once. It's better to have lots of short, casual talks as kids grow, anyway.

#### Set clear expectations

Make sure kids know that underage drinking is illegal and unacceptable. Set clear expectations and enforce your house rules consistently. Lock your alcohol in a fridge or cabinet if possible.

#### Be approachable

Be your kid's go-to for information and support—instead of friends or the internet—by taking their questions seriously and providing calm, easy-to-understand answers.

### What to say

#### Ask open-ended questions

Get kids talking by avoiding yes or no answers. Ask about friends' choices, school experiences, or thoughts on the alcohol use in the media.

#### Listen

Show you're interested by asking questions and let their responses guide the discussion.

#### Talk about the tough stuff

Kids can sometimes think of alcohol as a way to cope with stress or trauma in their lives. Give them a safe place to talk about those feelings instead—with you or a licensed provider.

#### Give them options

Warning kids about the dangers of alcohol is just the first step. Teach them about healthy alternatives such as exercise or meditation, enjoying music or gaming, learning a new skill, journaling, or spending time with people they trust.

#### Consider sharing your own story

What you share is up to you. By revealing your own choices, regrets, or family history may help kids understand what's at stake.

# 3 fast facts

to help kids understand the consequences of underage drinking

## About their friends

A lot of kids believe “everybody does it.” But underage drinking isn’t as popular in Wisconsin as you’d think.

- 1 Across Wisconsin, teen alcohol use is at its lowest rate ever.<sup>1</sup>
- 2 However, 1 in 6 Fond du Lac County students surveyed reported to have drank alcohol in the past month.<sup>2</sup>
- 3 The average age Fond du Lac youth report to start drinking is 13.<sup>2</sup>

## About their brain

Alcohol affects kid’s brains more powerfully than adults, and drinking before the brain is fully grown can have devastating effects.

- 1 Drinking alcohol can slow a teen’s brain activity for weeks.<sup>3</sup>
- 2 It can damage the parts of the brain responsible for learning, memory, and self-control.
- 3 Underage drinking can have long-lasting effects that continue to impact kids’ brain functions when they’re adults.<sup>4</sup>

1. Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Summary Report, 2019.
2. JKV Research, LLC. (2024). [Fond du Lac County Community Health Survey Report 2024](#).
3. Alcohol & The Adolescent Brain: Immediate Impairment, Long-Term Consequences, 2016.
4. Alcohol’s Effects on the Adolescent Brain: What Can Be Learned from Animal Models.
5. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2019.
6. Alcohol & Public Health Fact Sheet: Underage Drinking, 2018.



## About the risks

Underage drinking can seriously impact nearly every aspect of a young person’s life, from their behavior and relationships to their mental health.

- 1 Nearly 1 in 5 kids who drink have been in a car with a driver who’d been drinking alcohol.<sup>5</sup>
- 2 Drinking can lead to issues at school, with friends, and with the law.<sup>6</sup>
- 3 Underage drinking is associated with higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide.<sup>6</sup>

## About binge drinking

For women, binge drinking means having 4 alcoholic beverages in 2 hours or less. For men, it’s 5 drinks in 2 hours or less. Either way, binge drinking is especially dangerous for kids.

- 1 9 times out of 10, underage drinking is binge drinking.<sup>6</sup>
- 2 Kids who drink are more likely to experience alcohol poisoning.<sup>6</sup>
- 3 Binge drinking lowers inhibitions at a time when youth are already eager to take risks.<sup>3</sup>

