

Facts about Underage Drinking

Why Should We Care?

- More than four in 10 youth who begin drinking alcohol before the age of 15 become alcoholics at some time in their lives, compared with just nine percent of those who wait until they are 21.¹
- Of Lane County 11th graders who reported drinking, 10 percent reported driving after drinking in the past month.²
- In 2006, one in five drivers ages 16 to 20 who died in motor vehicle crashes had been drinking alcohol.³
- Repeated alcohol exposure can alter the trajectory, or path, of teen brain development impacting adolescents even after they become adults. Even occasional heavy drinking injures young brains.⁴
- Underage drinking is a leading contributor to death from injuries, which are the main cause of death for people under age 21. Annually, about 5,000 people under age 21 die from alcohol related injuries involving underage drinking.⁵



Teens Have Easy Access to Alcohol.

- Two-thirds of Lane County eighth graders and 82% of 11th graders say it is "very easy" or "sort of easy" to get beer, wine or hard liquor. (Usually from parties, friends or taking it from their homes.)⁵
- One in three Lane County 8th graders, and almost half of Lane County 11th graders, had an alcoholic beverage at least once in the last month.²

Youth Listen to Their Parents.

Youth who know their parents disapprove of underage drinking are less likely to drink alcohol. Lane County 8th graders who believed their parents would think it is "wrong" or "very wrong" if they drank alcohol were half as likely to drink than youth who believe their parents would think it is "a little bit wrong" or "not wrong at all."⁶

Sources:

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3. Dept of Transportation (US), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). (2008). *Traffic safety facts 2006: Alcohol-impaired driving*. Washington (DC): NHTSA. Available at URL: <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/810801.PDF>
4. Council on Scientific Affairs, American Medical Association. (2005). The neurocognitive effects of alcohol on adolescents and college students. *Preventive Medicine*, 40(1), 23-32
5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General. (2007, March). *The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking*. Retrieved from www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/underagedrinking/calltoaction.pdf.
6. Oregon Department of Human Services. (2009, September). *Lane County's epidemiological data on alcohol, drugs and mental health: 2000 to 2008*. Salem: Author.

