

Underage drinking

People who are under the legal drinking age should not drink alcohol



People who drink when they are underage do so at a time when they are maturing physically and psychologically.

They do so at a time in their lives when they may feel invincible or rebellious or when they are attempting to make a statement about their own independence.

When alcohol is added to the mix, inhibitions may be lowered, judgement may be impaired, risk-taking may follow, and serious, potentially life-threatening, problems can arise.

The legal position

In most countries around the world there are strict laws about the minimum age for purchasing and/or consuming alcohol. These laws are established for good reasons and they should be taken very seriously.

Depending on the circumstances and the country, violating these laws can result in substantial fines, losing your driving licence and maybe even jail time.

The effects

Underage drinking can cause serious problems at home and school. It has social consequences for underage drinkers, too, causing reputational damage and self-esteem issues if behaviour becomes out of control.

It can also be associated with or contribute to serious negative outcomes, including the following:

- Car accidents
- Other types of accidents
- Suicide
- School failure
- Truancy
- Theft and other unlawful behaviour
- Unsafe sex
- Other dangerous risk-taking practices.

In addition, the effects of alcohol on the developing brain are not completely known. Some studies have reported that underage drinking may impair brain development.

Respecting the law, one's self and each other is paramount.

Take action

Drinking is simply the wrong thing to do for the underage person. It is harmful to family cohesiveness and detrimental to communities and society. If you're a parent, know that your children will be influenced by the drinking patterns they see at home. If you drink alcohol in their presence, do so responsibly. When you talk to them about underage drinking, make sure you express your concern and not just your disapproval. You can also help influence your son or daughter's decision not to drink by:

- Having a close, supportive relationship with them
- Knowing who their friends are and what they are doing
- Enrolling them in structured after-school activities
- Setting household rules about not drinking – and the consequences for violating your family rules.

For the benefit of everyone involved, if someone is underage, try to help them to stop drinking. Never encourage underage drinking by illegally giving alcohol to someone who is not old enough to drink.

talkingalcohol.com

is a site dedicated to helping people make informed choices about alcohol

other websites

These sites contain further information that you may find useful. However SABMiller is not responsible for the content of these sites.

- Al-Anon Family Groups
www.al-anon.alateen.org/
- Alcohol and Drug Information Services (South Australia), Taking Action - Underage Drinking
www.alcohol.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=95
- Alcohol Response Ireland, Teenage – Underage Drinking – Ireland - Advice
www.alcoholresponse.com/?page_id=828

- Drinkingfacts.ca (Canada)
www.drinkingfacts.ca/english/index.asp
- Go Ask Alice! (US)
www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/Cat2.html
- International Center for Alcohol Policies, Young People's Drinking
www.icap.org/PolicyIssues/YoungPeoplesDrinking/
- NIAAA (US), College Drinking: Changing the Culture
www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/

