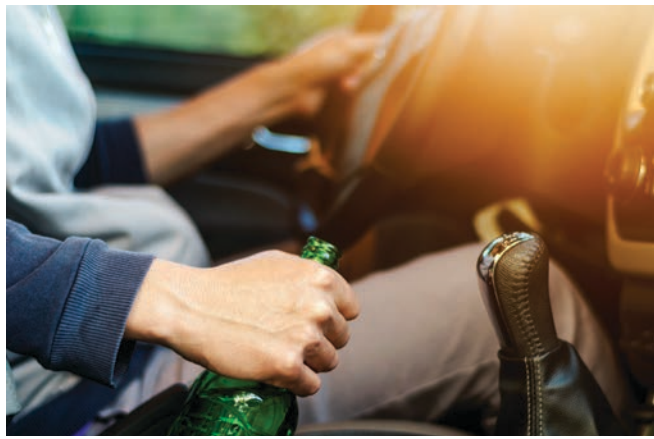


## BOOZE... FIREWATER... LIQUID COURAGE

There are a lot of names for alcohol, and there are dozens more for alcohol poisoning or being drunk. That's a great deal of creative energy wasted on the substance that kills more people than all illegal drugs combined. Alcohol is a powerful, addictive drug that kills over 3 million people a year. While alcohol routinely gives people headaches or makes them sick to their stomachs — a little vomit is the least of their worries.

Alcohol can cause trouble with family, school, work and the law. Teenagers who drink have lower grades in school, may lose their jobs, and can be arrested for purchasing, possessing or drinking alcohol. Drinking alcohol changes the way the brain works by blocking chemical signals, often causing people to think differently by affecting the areas of the brain involved in pleasure, memory, thinking, concentration, movement and time perception. Studies have shown that people who drink are more likely to have unsafe sex, get pregnant, or receive sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS. People who drink often also get into fights and commit other crimes almost twice as often as people who do not drink.



### THE ALCOHOL 4-1-1

Here's a few of alcohol's deadly statistics:

- Alcohol directly kills around 100,000 people every year.
- Alcoholism affects more people than diabetes, lung cancer, breast cancer and heart attacks.
- Drunk driving accidents kill about 15,000 and injure over 300,000 people every year.
- Alcohol use is involved in:
  - Half of murders, accidental deaths and suicides
  - A third of drowning, boating and aviation deaths
  - Half of all crimes
- 32% of incarcerated teens were drunk at the time of their crime and/or arrest.
- Alcohol is the top cause for early death and disability among 15- to 49-year-olds of all genders

“Alcohol is easily addictive and dangerous. It can ruin your brain, body and life.”

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you or someone you know is having problems with alcohol abuse, you are not alone. There are people and places ready to help. Resources include school counselors, family members, members of the clergy, hospital substance-abuse programs, and private practitioners.

#### National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

[niaaa.nih.gov](http://niaaa.nih.gov)

#### Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

[samhsa.gov](http://samhsa.gov)

#### National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

[drugabuse.gov](http://drugabuse.gov)

**in the know**

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# ALCOHOL

Straight Facts: Serious Danger



## WHAT IS ALCOHOL?

Alcohol is a drug that contains the chemical ethanol, or ethyl alcohol. This chemical is produced through the fermentation (the breakdown of sugars without oxygen) of fruits such as grapes and apples, as well grains and starches such as potatoes and cereals. Examples of alcohols include:

- Beer and malt liquor
- Wine
- Liquor (whiskey, vodka, etc.)
- “Wine coolers”—fruit-flavored drinks
- Liqueurs

## HOW DOES ALCOHOL WORK BIOLOGICALLY?

Alcohol is a depressant. It slows the function of the brain, numbs pain, makes the drinker sleepy, releases the brain’s “feel-good” chemical dopamine and increases the level of opioid peptides. This results in a euphoric, happy state of mind that reduces anxiety. As a person drinks more, the central nervous system slows down dangerously. Over time, alcohol causes neuroadaptation — permanent changes in the brain that significantly harms a person.



## SHORT-TERM EFFECTS OF DRINKING

- Slower reactions and poor coordination
- Heavy sweating
- Blurry or double vision
- Nausea and vomiting
- Lowered reasoning ability
- Doing or saying things you regret
- Lower heart rate
- Slowed breathing
- Anxiety, restlessness
- Mental confusion, memory loss
- Coma
- Death

## LONG-TERM HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF USING ALCOHOL

Long-term use of alcohol can wreck a person’s health. Alcohol can and will kill anyone who drinks too much or for too long. Every effect of alcohol is more damaging in teenagers than it is in adults. This is because the brain does not stop developing until the mid-twenties, making younger people more likely to experience brain alteration. In addition, most alcohol-related diseases progress more rapidly in women than in men. Heavy or long-term drinking causes irreversible, often fatal damage to the body including:

- Liver diseases
- Heart disease and stroke
- Brain cell death
- Cancer of the mouth, pharynx, esophagus, breast, pancreas, liver, colon and rectum
- Decreased bone density
- Damage to eyes and skin

- Malnutrition and gastric illnesses
- Sexual problems in men and women

Alcohol will stunt your growth. It slows the rapid bone growth that occurs in young bodies and causes decreased bone density. Alcohol harms the liver so the body cannot absorb the calcium it needs to make your bones strong. In addition, women who are pregnant must not drink any alcohol, as it can be passed to the baby through the umbilical cord and seriously harm the child’s growth. Alcohol use during pregnancy is the #1 cause of nonhereditary mental retardation and causes lifelong hyperactive behavior, deformities and learning disabilities.



## ALCOHOLISM

Alcohol is addictive. People who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21. 15.1 million American adults have an alcohol abuse problem. Alcoholism is a real and serious problem that worsens over time. Alcoholics continue to drink in spite of the real problems alcohol causes in their lives because they are mentally, emotionally, and physically dependent on the drug to function and feel normal.

These individuals must drink more and more every day to experience the same effects they once felt. It is a true, severe addiction complete with painful withdrawal symptoms such as tremors, hallucinations and convulsions. The scariest part? It can happen to anyone.

## LEGAL CONSEQUENCES OF DRINKING ALCOHOL

It is no wonder that alcohol is illegal for people under 21. It is a dangerous drug, the most abused substance in America and one of the most common addictions in the world. It is illegal for anyone to drive under the influence of alcohol because of the way it impairs the senses. For minors, penalties for buying, possessing or drinking alcohol include:

- Juvenile detention
- Probation
- Fines up to several thousand dollars depending on the state and charge
- Losing your driver’s license
- Jail time
- Mandatory alcohol rehabilitation

## AVOID ALCOHOL

Alcohol causes more disease, destruction and death for teenagers than all illegal drugs combined. It is a highly addictive and dangerous substance that may seem fun, but has destroyed the lives of many. The smartest and healthiest choice to make is to choose not to drink alcohol. Stand up for your health.



**Alcohol is the most commonly abused drug in the United States...don't be another statistic.**

