

Alcohol

The Law and Its Effects



Alcohol



What does the law say?

It is illegal for anyone under 18 to buy, or try to buy alcohol in the UK.

It is also illegal for an adult to buy or attempt to buy alcohol on behalf of someone under 18.

16 and 17 year olds are allowed to drink (but not buy) wine, beer or cider in licensed premises, if they are eating a meal and accompanied by an adult.

In some states in America, it is illegal to drink until you are 21. Do you agree or disagree with this? Why?

What are your thoughts on the UK laws? Are they fair or too strict? Why?

Alcohol

What does the law say?

There are other laws about alcohol which are not only to do with age...

- In most parts of Scotland, it is illegal to drink in the streets or in public places, like parks.
- Scotland recently changed the law about drink driving by further reducing the amount of alcohol a driver can consume.



Alcohol

What does society say?

- Alcohol is not illegal, but it can be dangerous if abused.
- Underage drinking is a common problem leading to children making poor decisions and health problems in later life.
- Alcohol is everywhere in the media!
- Some people have a drink in social situations or enjoy a drink with a meal. This is completely safe as long as they are following government guidelines and not drinking too much or drinking too often.
- However, some people simply drink to get drunk which is when drinking alcohol becomes very dangerous.



Alcohol

Why do people drink underage?

- Some people are just curious to see what the fuss is all about!
- Some people want to taste it.
- All of their friends are drinking and they feel they need to join in or they could be made fun of. This is called **peer pressure**.
- Can you think of any other reasons why young people might try alcohol?

No matter the reasons why, it can be very dangerous to drink underage.

Why Should I Wait until I'm 18?

Whilst it may be legal and socially acceptable, alcohol is first and foremost a drug. Drinking too much or too often can cause many problems later on in life. Some of these problems are:

- **Alcohol Poisoning.** This is when the alcohol level in the body gets so high that simple brain functions can be blocked. Every year thousands of children are hospitalised with alcohol poisoning.
- **Liver Damage.** Some people think that only alcoholics (people dependant on alcohol) will get liver damage but this isn't the case.
- **Accident and injuries.** Children who have drunk alcohol are much more likely to get hurt.

Why Should I Wait until I'm 18?

- **Changes in appearance.** Research shows that underage drinkers are more likely to suffer from a range of health issues including major weight gain or weight loss, bad skin, disturbed sleep, headaches...the list goes on.
- **Problems with brain development.** During childhood and teenage years, the brain is still developing. Drinking can affect memory function, reactions, learning ability and attention span.
- **Mental Health.** Too much alcohol can cause mental illness and depression, the effects are not just physical!
- **Aggression and violence.** Children and teenagers who drink may behave and react unpredictably – they have less self-control and this can lead to arguments and fights, which could lead to arrest and a criminal record.



What Does Alcohol Do to My Body?

When you drink alcohol, it is absorbed directly into your bloodstream and distributed throughout your body.

- This includes your brain and other parts of your central nervous system. Alcohol can cause many problems like slurred speech; it can affect your coordination, balance and ability to walk.
- It can become difficult to think clearly and cause some memory loss.
- Over the long term, drinking can actually shrink the frontal lobes of your brain.
- The liver's main function is to break down harmful substances in your body, excessive drinking can damage the liver meaning these harmful and toxic substances remain in your body.
- Alcohol can also damage the pancreas which means your body's blood sugar levels could become too high or too low. This is especially dangerous for someone with diabetes.

Alcohol and the Media

Think about different advertisements you have seen for alcohol. This could be on the TV, in newspapers, magazines or on signs.

Which ones spring to mind? Why?

There seem to be lots of adverts promoting alcohol, but did you know that the UK have some of strictest advertising rules when it comes to alcohol?

For example, the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) emphasises protecting young people, so adverts for alcohol must not be directed at under 18s or link alcohol with irresponsible behaviour, social success or attractiveness.

Alcohol adverts are banned from appearing in and around programmes which are targeted or appeal to any audience under the age of 18. If Channel 5 were showing a family movie, they could not put any alcohol related adverts on during the breaks.

Discuss with your partner or group if you think these rules make a difference.



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