

Childhood & Adolescent Drinking in Wisconsin

What's Going on Here?

“Too often, parents are inclined to believe ‘Not my child’, yet by age 15 approximately half of America’s boys and girls have had a full drink of alcohol.”

Surgeon General of the United States*

Wisconsin’s Youth Begin Drinking Very Young

- About half of Wisconsin’s youth have their first drink of alcohol - more than a few sips - at age 14 or earlier.
- About one quarter of our youth report taking their first drink before they are teenagers, at age 12 or younger.
- 49% of high school students drank at least once in the past 30 days.

Wisconsin’s Youth Consume Large Amounts of Alcohol

- 32% of students in Grades 9-12 drank 5 or more drinks in a row, at least once, during the previous month.
- 37% say there was “no risk” or only a “slight risk” of harm to themselves from consuming 5 drinks in a row. Just 35% of the youth believe 5 drinks in a single sitting presents a moderate risk.

All Youth Are at Risk

Even children with strong family ties and good support systems drink alcohol.

- 87% of youth agree or strongly agree they receive family support and help.
- 61% of Wisconsin youth reported their parents would say it was “wrong” or “very wrong” of them to consume alcohol twice a month.
- 63% have at least 3 adults in their lives, other than their parents, they would be comfortable asking an important, life-affecting question.

Statistics from: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. *2007 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey*

*Kenneth P. Moritsugu, M.D., M.P.H., Acting Surgeon General of the United States. *Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking, 2007*



Adolescent Drinking: Serious Physical Consequences It Matters

**“Underage alcohol use is not inevitable,
and schools, parents, and other adults are not powerless to stop it.”**

Surgeon General of the United States*

Alcohol Use Impacts Brain Function

- Studies suggest that the portion of the brain critical to learning is especially vulnerable to the adverse effects of alcohol during adolescence.
- When youth in long term treatment were tested after detoxification, they showed a 10% deficit in the ability to recall both verbal and nonverbal information.
- Because youth suffer a higher level of memory impairment from alcohol use, they appear to be at an even greater risk for continuing risky behaviors they may not recall.

Adolescent Drinking Can Limit the Future

- Youth who begin drinking before age 14 have a 41% chance of becoming alcoholic at some point during their lifetime. This compares to a 10% risk attached to someone who abstains from alcohol until age 21.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth. Over one-quarter of suicides among youth ages 9 -15 can be directly attributed or are related to alcohol use.

Statistics from: Brown, Sandra A., Tapert, Susan F. “Health Consequences of Adolescent Alcohol Involvement. Background Paper,” *Reducing Underage Drinking A Collective Responsibility*, National Research Council Institute of Medicine. P. 383-391.

*Kenneth P. Moritsugu, M.D., M.P.H., Acting Surgeon General of the United States. *Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking*, 2007

