

# TEEN TURNING POINTS



## Effects of Underage Drinking

As teens try their best to navigate the confusing and difficult time that is adolescence, they may feel tempted or pressured by their friends or peers to drink. Underage drinking is a growing problem in Michigan. Underage drinking can have many negative consequences, including poor academic performance, violence, risky sexual behavior, unplanned pregnancies, alcohol poisoning, and even death (1). Early drinking can cause teens to develop memory and concentration problems, difficulty learning, liver damage, and other serious health problems. Underage drinking can also lead to increased probability of smoking cigarettes, using smokeless tobacco, and using other drugs. Drinking alcohol and using smokeless tobacco may cause a higher risk for throat and mouth cancers (1). As a teen or a parent, it is important to be aware of all of the dangers associated with underage drinking and know how to avoid and prevent it.

### More Dangers of Underage Drinking

According to the report "Consequences of Underage Drinking in Michigan Youth," underage drinkers are more than twice as likely to have acted violently in the past 30 days. They were more likely to have carried a weapon and were more likely to have been in a physical fight within the last month than non-drinkers are. Teen drinkers were also more likely than non-drinkers to experience mental and emotional distress or to consider or attempt suicide. Teens who drink or who are around other underage drinkers are also at risk for drunk driving or getting into a car with a drunk driver. A 2009 Michigan Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that young men are more likely to get behind the wheel drunk, while young women are more likely to ride in a car with a drunk driver. Drunk drivers cause many preventable deaths every year.

1. 2011 Michigan Youth Risk Behavior Survey

### Parents: Preventing Underage Drinking

- Talk to your children about the dangers of alcohol use when they are young, and continue to talk to them about it throughout their high school years.
- Discuss ways to refuse and avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- Don't use alcohol or tobacco around your child, don't offer it to them, and don't leave it in a place where they can easily get it. Consider locking up alcohol and tobacco products in a safe place.
- Don't allow or enable underage drinking to take place on your property (1).

### Teens: How to Avoid Underage Drinking

Try to surround yourself with positive people who don't drink or use drugs. Try to avoid situations where there might be underage drinking. If someone offers you alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs say no. If someone continues to pressure you, get out of the situation. Remember that while underage drinking may seem like a popular or cool thing to do, it is very dangerous and poses numerous risks.

### If you need help

If you are unsure of what decision or choice to make, talk to your parents or a trusted friend. Teachers and counselors are also good people to talk to. If you need more advice, call Crisis Services, at (810) 257-3740 or toll free at (877) 346-3648, where someone is always available to help you. TTY users call (810) 232-6310. For more information about underage drinking, visit [www.mcrud.org](http://www.mcrud.org) [www.genhs.org](http://www.genhs.org)