

# Alcohol

## Underage Drinking

### Basic Information

In Wisconsin, though youth are drinking less than previous years, they are still drinking more than youth in other states. One reason for this is that drinking alcohol at community events, including youth events, is common. Seeing adults binge drink can influence youth to believe it isn't risky, increasing the chance of underage drinking and binge drinking.



Underage drinking can damage the parts of brain that shape how kids feel, learn, behave, and grow. This damage can have lifelong physical, social, and emotional consequences, including higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide.

Risk factors for underage drinking include family members or parents who binge drink, stress, anxiety, depression, and easy access to alcohol through family and friends.

Parents and guardians can help prevent underage drinking by drinking alcohol responsibly, having conversations and setting boundaries, and by keeping alcohol in a secure location.

**In 2019, among 12 to 14-year-olds, 96.5% reported they got their alcohol for free the last time they drank.<sup>6</sup>**

### Health and Social Effects

- Disruption of normal growth and sexual development
- Damage to parts of the brain responsible for learning, memory, and self-control
- Increased risk of mental illnesses; increase in anger and irritability
- Higher rates of school absences and lower grades
- Lack of participation and interest in normal youth activities

In 2021, Eau Claire County students in 9th-12th grades reported...



2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

### Consequences of Underage Drinking



Legal problems - arrest for driving or fighting while under the influence



Unintentional injuries like drowning, falls, and burns



Increased risk of other substance misuse and alcohol misuse in adulthood



Alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes



Increased risk of suicide and homicide







Eau Claire City-County  
**Health Department**





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# What can our community do?



## Everyone

-  Do not buy or provide alcohol for underage youth
-  Plan and participate in alcohol-free events to reduce exposure to binge drinking
-  If you drink, practice and model responsible drinking of alcohol
-  If you have someone underage in your home, make sure alcohol is in a secure place where it is not easily accessible; like locked cabinets or fridges







## Parents and Guardians

-  Talk with your child from an early age and inform them of the side effects of consuming alcohol
-  Set clear expectations; ask questions when your teen is going to a party
-  If you drink, model responsible drinking
-  Encourage your child to participate in sports, clubs, and/or alcohol-free activities

## Retailers

-  Stay up to date on laws and do not sell to minors or those who appear to be buying for minors. Check IDs thoroughly before sale.
-  Attend Retailer ID check trainings

## Policy Makers

-  Increase alcohol tax
-  Create and enforce commercial host liability and social host policies
-  Regulate the number and concentration of alcohol retailers in communities
-  Enforce laws prohibiting alcohol sales to minors and increase fines for those caught drinking underage
-  Designate alcohol-free rec areas and parks
-  Prohibit the sale of alcohol in places minors freely have access to; like gas stations

## Prevention and Intervention Resources

### Small Talks

Having small, casual conversations with kids, starting around age 8, can help prevent underage drinking. [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/small-talks](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/small-talks)

### SAMHSA National Helpline (1-800-662-HELP)

Free, confidential, 24/7 referral and information

### Parents Empowered

Learn more about bonding, boundaries, and monitoring to decrease chances of underage drinking. [www.parentsempowered.org](http://www.parentsempowered.org)

### Talk. They Hear You.

Numerous resources, including an app. [www.samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you](http://www.samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you)

### Check Your Drinking - Alcohol Screening Tool

Anonymously check your drinking habits. If you want to drink less, build a plan through this tool to make healthier choices. [www.cdc.gov/alcohol/CheckYourDrinking](http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/CheckYourDrinking)

### 211 (or 877-947-2211)

Connect with services in your area. [211wisconsin.communityos.org](http://211wisconsin.communityos.org)

## Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services
- 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- Federal Drug Administration
- National Institute on Drug Abuse; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health

For more information visit  
[www.ECHealthAlliance.org](http://www.ECHealthAlliance.org)  
[www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)  
[www.cadca.org](http://www.cadca.org)  
[www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)



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