



Parents Make A Difference!

Teens and Binge Drinking

March 2005

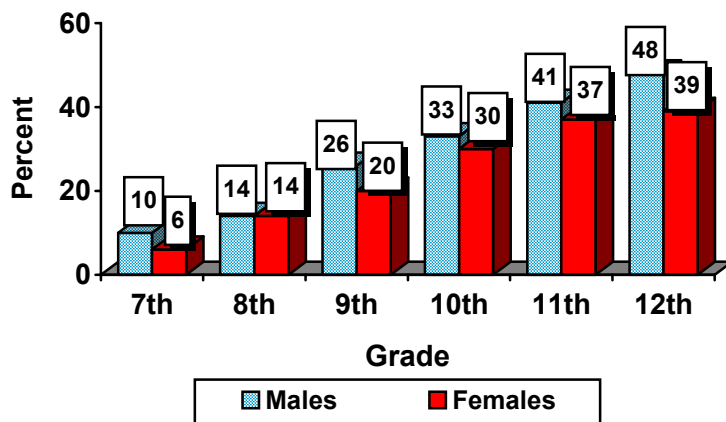
Every year we hear reports about young people who are tragically injured or die as a result of excessive alcohol consumption. Often these incidents happen on college campuses, however, it is not just college students who binge drink. Research from the recent Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS) of 5704 7-12th graders found that 27% of students in southwest Wisconsin engaged in “binge drinking” in the month prior to the survey.

What is Binge Drinking?

Binge drinking is generally defined as having five or more alcoholic drinks in a row or within a short period of time. Specifically, SWYS asked: “During the past month, have you had 5 or more alcoholic drinks at one time?” Youth were given a variety of possible responses that allowed them to answer “no” or to indicate the number of times they were binge drinking in the past month.

The graph below shows the level of binge drinking among southwest Wisconsin teens:

Southwest Wisconsin Teens Who Report “Binge Drinking” in the Past Month



What are the Risks of Binge Drinking?

According to National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, the risks of binge drinking are numerous. These risks include alcohol poisoning, poor school performance, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, unintentional injuries (e.g., motor vehicle crashes, falls, burns, drowning and hypothermia), and violence (homicide, suicide, domestic violence and sexual assault). Binge drinkers are four times more likely to report alcohol impaired driving than non-binge drinkers.

Fifty-five percent of southwest Wisconsin teens that reported binge drinking in the past month also said that they had engaged in sexual intercourse. This compares with 15% of those who did not binge in the past month and reported having engaged in sexual intercourse.

What Effect Does Alcohol Have on the Teen Brain?

Recent research has found that alcohol does have effects on the teen brain, which continues to develop. Because adolescence is a time when the brain is forming new networks, exposing the brain to alcohol during this period may interrupt key processes of brain development.

A study of alcohol dependent and non-alcohol dependent 15 and 16 year olds found that alcohol dependent youth had greater difficulty remembering words and simple geometric designs after a 10-minute interval. Other studies have found that memory problems were common among adolescents in treatment who had experienced alcohol withdrawal symptoms.

Sophisticated imaging techniques on the brains of 17-year-olds who displayed alcohol induced intellectual and behavior problems found that these teens had a smaller hippocampus (a part of the brain important in memory and learning), when compared with other 17-year-olds.

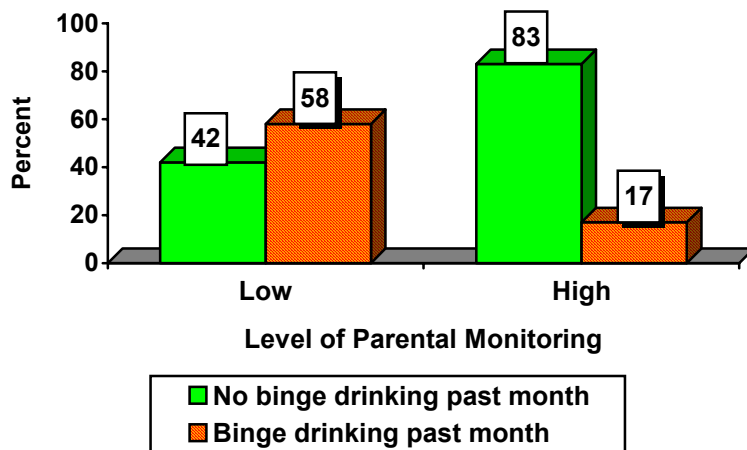
Parents Can Make a Difference!!!

There is much good news that comes out of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey for parents. SWYS found six parenting practices that were related to lower levels of teen binge drinking. Those practices include:

- Eating dinner as a family
- Communicating to teens that you think it wrong for teens to drink
- Showing love and support for your teen
- A willingness to report teens for violating school activity codes
- Strong parental monitoring
- Establishing consequences for violating family rules and consistently enforcing those consequences when rules are broken

The graph below compares the level of binge drinking for teens who report that their parents provide low levels of parental monitoring and for teens who report their parents provide high levels of parental monitoring. More information on these parenting practices can be found at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/grant/tap/parentresources.html>

**Binge Drinking Among Southwest Wisconsin Teens
By Levels of Parental Monitoring**



"Parents Make a Difference" is a product of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS), a program of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, local school districts and UW-Platteville. This series is adapted from the UW-Extension "Whose Kids?...Our Kids!" series. This issue was written by Tom Schmitz, UW-Extension Grant and Lafayette County and edited by Deb Ivey, Ruth Schriefer and Sarah Weier, UW-Extension Iowa County and Bev Doll, UW-Extension Grant County. Thanks are extended to the 5,704 7th to 12th graders from southwest Wisconsin who participated in the 2001 SWYS survey. Contact UW-Extension for further information, or by phone Grant County (608) 723-2125; Lafayette County (608) 776-4820; and Iowa County (608) 935-0391 or on the web at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/grant/tap/parentresources.html>. References for this edition of *Parents Make A Difference* include: The National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, The National Institute On Drug Abuse, and The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

Tips for Talking with Your Teen About Alcohol

- **Have several conversations** and don't lecture. Several small talks are more effective than one big talk.
- **Think about what you'll say** and how your teen might react. Choose a time to talk when you both have "down time".
- **Discuss** what they know and think about teen drinking. Listen carefully without interrupting.
- **Review how the media** portrays alcohol use. Is drinking really as glamorous as the media makes it seem? Research shows that teens who believe that the alcohol will make them popular, attractive, happy and cool are more likely to drink at earlier ages.

ALCOHOL FACTS FOR YOUR TEEN

Many teens believe they know all there is to know about alcohol, but many myths and misinformation are prevalent in teenage culture. Some important facts to share are:

- **Alcohol is a powerful drug** that slows reaction time and impairs vision, coordination, clear thinking and judgment.
- **Beer and wine are not safer** than hard liquor. A 12-ounce can of beer, a 5-ounce glass of wine and 1.5 ounces of hard liquor all contain the same amount of alcohol.
- **It takes 2 to 3 hours** for a single drink to leave the body's system. Nothing can speed up this process; not coffee, cold showers, fresh air or walking it off.