

## Alcohol Awareness

While there has been significant focus placed on campaigns regarding the opioid epidemic, it's important to not lose sight of the dangers posed by alcohol and underage drinking. April is Alcohol Awareness Month, which helps educate people about the damaging effects of alcohol and alcoholism. It also helps renew support for individuals battling to overcome addiction.

Some facts about alcohol:

- Alcohol is the most commonly used addictive substance in the United States.
- More than 23 million people over the age of 12 are addicted to alcohol and other drugs, which in turn affects their spouses, children, family members, friends, neighbors, and co-workers.
- Excessive alcohol use is responsible for 2.5 million years of potential life lost annually, or an average of about 30 years of potential life lost for each alcohol-related death.
- People age 12- to 20-years-old drink 13 percent of all alcohol consumed in the U.S. and more than 90 percent is in the form of binge drinking.
- A recent study found that approximately 10% of 9- and 10-year-olds have already started drinking, and one in three began drinking before age 13. By age 15, approximately 50% have had at least one drink.
- Alcohol use problems cost society more than \$249 billion per year due to lost productivity, health care costs, and criminal justice costs.

### Youth Alcohol Use

Research indicates that alcohol use during the teenage years can interfere with normal adolescent brain development and increase the risk of developing alcohol use disorder. In addition, underage drinking contributes to a range of acute consequences, such as crime, injuries, sexual assaults, and even deaths. The longer children delay drinking and drug use, the less likely they are to develop problems associated with it.

Parents play a key role in warning their children about the dangers of alcohol and drugs. Research shows that kids who learn about the risks of alcohol and drugs from their parents are up to 50% less likely to use. Parents influence whether and when adolescents begin drinking. Family policies should be established to disallow adolescent drinking, and adults need to be mindful of the example they set for their children when they drink.

### When to Seek Help

Alcoholism is not defined by what you drink, when you drink it, or even how much you drink. Whether a person drinks every day or only on weekends, or whether a person drinks hard liquor, beer, or wine, what matters most is **what happens when they drink**. If their drinking is causing problems at home, at work, physically, financially, emotionally or legally, it is time to get help.

Be mindful of the dangers of alcohol and alcoholism, and do what you can to be a positive influence to those around you. We all have an investment in reducing the devastating impact that alcohol has on us as individuals, family members, and members of our communities.

For more information, please visit our website at [www.drugfreeadamscounty.org](http://www.drugfreeadamscounty.org).