

# Alcohol

Alcohol is a depressant that affects nearly every part of your body. The damage it does now can impact the rest of your life.

AKA

Drink, booze, brew, liquor, sauce

What is it?

Alcohol is a depressant derived from the fermentation of natural sugars in fruits, vegetables and grains. These are brewed and distilled into a wide range of beverages with various alcohol contents.

The Risks

In small doses, some of the short-term effects of alcohol are reduced tension and relaxation, but these are also accompanied by reduced inhibition (your ability to stop yourself from doing something you know you shouldn't), coordination and reaction time – all of which put you at risk.<sup>1</sup>

When you drink a lot and drink fast (binge drinking), the risks go up even faster. In addition to the serious danger of alcohol poisoning, the depressant effects of alcohol can overwhelm your body's defenses. Unable to move and think clearly, you can do risky and reckless things that are unsafe, or even lethal.

Each year, approximately 5,000 people under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking. This includes about 1,900 deaths from car accidents, 1,600 homicides, 300 suicides, and hundreds of other deaths due to accidents like falls, burns and drownings.<sup>2</sup>

Long-Term Effects

Alcohol travels through your bloodstream and can damage your brain, stomach, liver, kidneys and muscles. As a teenager, your body is still developing, so damage done to it now can affect the rest of your life.<sup>3</sup> Over time, drinking can wreak havoc with your body and mind.

The Bottom Line

Yes, it's legal for people 21 and older. One reason is that alcohol can have seriously dangerous, long-term impacts on a body and brain that are still developing. Also, statistics show that more teens are killed by alcohol than by all illegal drugs combined.<sup>1</sup>

Sources

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Overview of Alcohol Consumption. Retrieved May 2013.

[View Source](#)

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking.

Published March 2007. Retrieved October 2011.