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Underage Drinking Isn't Just Illegal, It Damages The Brain

Sure, we all know that alcohol is illegal for kids under the age of 21. People often comment that teens are not responsible enough to handle drinking alcohol or that they are too immature to be moderate in their consumption. What is rarely discussed in this debate over the legal drinking age, however, is the dire affect that alcohol has on the brains of teenagers.



Did you know that the average adolescent's brain doesn't fully develop until the age of 25? As caring adults in the lives of teenagers, we want to give them the best opportunity to become healthy, responsible adults—this includes waiting to consume alcohol until the legal drinking age.

Consider the following from the [University of Utah's medical experts](#) when talking to teens about refraining from alcohol use:

- Along with the toddler years, adolescence is one of the critical times of brain development after birth. The brain experiences major changes, especially in forming new nerve connections.
- During this tumultuous time in a teen's brain development, alcohol has a much greater effect on teens' memory than adults. Tests on animals suggest that these effects can be permanent.
- Teens who binge drink may impair brain development in such a way that it accelerates alcohol use and lead to alcohol abuse later in life.
- 47% of teens who drink before the age of 14 become alcohol-dependent at some point in their lives. This is compared to 9% of people who start drinking at age 21 or older.

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