

TEENAGE DRINKING:

COMMUNICATING WITH OTHER PARENTS AND FAMILIES

This fact sheet discusses tips for parents in communicating with other parents and families when their teenager is visiting friends, or attending or hosting a party...

Did you know?

- › Most parents have rules regarding their teenagers and alcohol, but enforcing these rules can be difficult when your teenager is visiting another family or attending a party.

Key facts

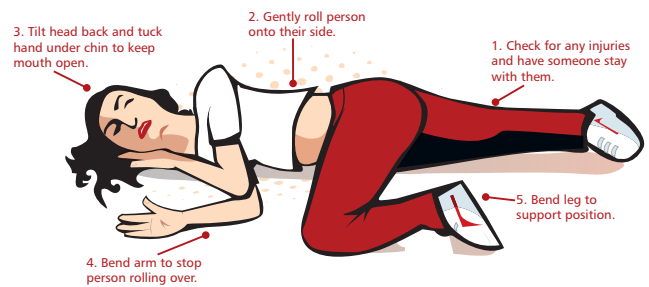
- › Many young people spend a significant amount of time at their friends' homes.
- › Families can have very different values and attitudes towards alcohol. This can make communication with other parents/families difficult. However, in the interests of your teenager's safety, it is very important to have good communication with them.
- › In Victoria it is generally illegal to supply alcohol to minors. The 2011 amendment to the Liquor Control Reform Act provides exemptions where alcohol is supplied by a parent or guardian, or where the alcohol is supplied to the person under the age of 18 by someone who is authorised by that person's parent or guardian.

Special considerations and tips

- › **Talk to your teenager.** It helps to make sure your teenager knows exactly what the boundaries and limits are in relation to alcohol. Although it's important to be firm, confident, clear and consistent, keep in mind that it can be challenging for your teenager to stick to your rules when faced with a different set of rules in their friends' families homes.
- › **Is your teenager attending a party?** As the parent of a minor, you have a right to all the information needed to decide whether or not to allow your child to attend a party. Here are some things to consider:
 - Written invitations tend to mean that the party is for invited guests only. The RSVP also provides an opportunity to speak with the party host's parents.
 - Find out how many people will be at the party, and if indeed attendance is by invitation only, whether there will be any food served, whether alcohol will be provided or allowed and what time the party will finish.
- › Drop off your teenager at the party and arrange to pick her or him up at a certain time.
 - Get the name and phone number of a responsible adult who will be present at the party, and don't hesitate to call them if you are concerned about anything.
- › **Are you hosting a teenage party?** As the parent of a teenager having a party, you are legally considered the host of the party. Therefore, you need to be well informed of the legal and insurance implications.
- › **Plan well.** First, decide what kind of party to hold, including whether or not alcohol will be allowed. Make sure you discuss the party with your teenager. As the adult, the decision ultimately is yours, but things will go more smoothly if everyone in the family agrees about the party and takes the same approach.
- › **If you are unsure, seek help or advice from other parents:** 'My daughter is having a party next weekend and I don't think we'll be allowing any alcohol as we don't drink/let underage people drink in our home.' Or 'I'm having difficulty deciding whether to allow Sarah and Catherine to have alcohol at their birthday party as we let them have a drink, but other families may not—what do you think?'

- › **'No-alcohol' party.** Having a party with no alcohol is a valid choice, especially when there will be lots of young teenagers present. There are many ways to give the occasion that bit of 'spark'. For example, by having a theme party or being creative with the decorations and activities. Experiment with fruit and other ingredients to create fun and exotic 'mocktails'. Show your teenager that alcohol is not needed to make the party a success.
- › **Adult supervision.** Having some extra adults at the party can be a great help, especially if a large number of young people have been invited. Helpers can be particularly useful for preventing gatecrashers and for serving drinks. You may even consider hiring a security firm.
- › **Your duty of care.** As the host you have a duty of care to all of your guests. This means that you will need to do all that you reasonably can to provide a safe environment, protect your guests (young people as well as adults), and help them avoid trouble. With this in mind, ensure that you are firm, clear and consistent in applying your party rules to all guests while they are on your premises.
- › **Plan for emergencies.** It's a good idea to have a plan for emergencies and to have someone available at the party who is able to provide emergency first aid and is familiar with the recovery position. Don't hesitate to call for an ambulance if one is needed—call 000 for police, ambulance or fire brigade (or 112 if your mobile phone is out of range).
- › **Talk to your guests' parents.** Under the Liquor Control Reform Amendment 2011 you are responsible for obtaining the consent of parents, guardians or spouses for the supply of alcohol to minors in your home. Other parents may object to their children attending if alcohol will be consumed. They may want to be reassured that the party will be properly supervised.
- › **Use the invitation to provide information.** A written invitation can be helpful for other parents. As well as the usual details about when and where the party will be held, your invitation should make it clear whether only invited guests may attend, whether or not alcohol will be allowed etc. Include your contact details and an RSVP date so other parents can call you for the information they may need to help them decide whether to allow their teenager to attend the party.

- › **Make a guest list with emergency contact numbers.** A guest list can be a useful way to keep track of party guests. It can also be used as a way to record parent/guardian phone numbers for your guests if there was to be an emergency and you needed to contact someone.



Recovery position

An unconscious person should be gently moved into the recovery position so their tongue cannot fall back and prevent breathing.

Further information/Where to get help

- › **Victoria Police.** You can register your party with your local police station and receive a Partysafe kit (see www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=9566) with helpful information. If you register your party well in advance of the date, they may be able to organise for a patrol car to drive by on the night, to check for any trouble with gatecrashers. Your community legal service, council or shire office may also be able to tell you about local laws, for example, regarding acceptable noise levels.
- › **Fact sheet 2: Alcohol, teenage parties and the law** explains Victorian law in relation to underage drinking, provides suggestions for minimising the harms of alcohol use and discusses how some parents are actively working to change the laws on underage drinking.
- › **The Australian Drug Foundation** has published a helpful booklet on Hosting Teenage Parties. To obtain a copy, or for more information, see www.druginfo.adf.org.au or telephone 1300 85 85 84.
- › **Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD)** Drug Education website www.education.vic.gov.au/drugeducation provides *Celebrating Safely—Look After Your Mates* and other information for parents and students to help children celebrate safely at the Learning and Teaching page.