



Fact Sheet 2

Adolescent Drinking Behaviour

Young people aged 16-24 are amongst the heaviest drinkers in Australian society. In NSW, 50% of males and 37% of females in this age group drink more than 2 standard drinks per day which is the low risk level recommended in the Australian Alcohol Guidelines. (NSW Population Health Survey 2009)

Paul Dillon from Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia (who is the keynote speaker at the north coast RRISK Seminars) said that many young people drink “to get out of it, to get wasted” and that “Australia is one of the few countries where binge drinking is acceptable”.

Young people are less likely than adults to be concerned about the negative consequences of heavy drinking. They are more at risk than adults as they are physically and psychologically immature, lack experience with alcohol, are more willing to engage in risk taking behaviour and are often unaware of the dangers of excessive consumption.

Choosing not to drink or learning how to drink responsibly can be among the most difficult tasks facing young people today. Parents and carers are often so concerned about the risks associated with illicit drug use that they forget that alcohol is the substance most likely to be the potential source of harm.

Under age drinking is becoming an ever increasing concern. The earlier young people start drinking, the more likely they are to become high risk drinkers and experience alcohol related harm whilst they are young and in later life.

Who supplies alcohol to young people?

Parents are the most common suppliers of alcohol with 28% of males and 29.5% of females under the legal drinking age of 18 reporting that they obtained alcohol from their parents; 21.6% of males and 23.4% of females reporting that they obtained it from friends and 21% of males and 25% of females asked someone to buy it for them. (NSW School Students Health Behaviours, 2008)

Parents and carers need to consider the wisdom of supplying alcohol to their underage adolescents. They can help young people to make safer decisions by discussing risks and safety strategies, particularly when celebrations are occurring. Parents should keep up with what is happening in the lives of the young people in their care and take positive steps to prevent them or others from drinking and driving.

School based courses (Personal Development, Health and Physical Education) and the RRISK seminars also help students make informed safer choices.

Look for information about the RRISK Program and risk taking at our website
www.rrisk.com.au