

UNDERAGE DRINKING AND ADDICTION

Increased Risk of Addiction



THE BRAIN REWARDS positive actions with feelings of pleasure so we want to repeat them. We remember pleasure through “feel-good” brain chemicals, or neurotransmitters, which connect the pleasure to the thing we enjoyed. Alcohol hijacks our brain’s pleasure-reward system by tricking the brain into generating pleasure-reward feelings from a harmful chemical instead of a real experience.

If teens continue drinking, the brain changes and adapts to the presence of alcohol, and soon they need more and more alcohol to create the same amount of pleasure. If they continue to drink they will begin to crave it and feel uncomfortable — sometimes even extreme discomfort — without it. They become addicted. Getting their next drink becomes more important than family, grades or even sports.

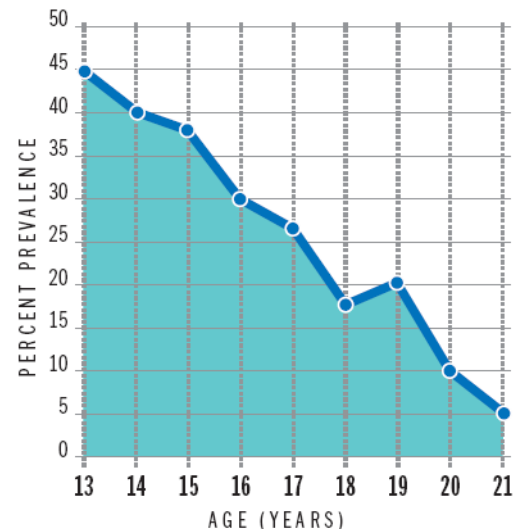
Because the teen brain produces an abundance of dopamine, it can go rapidly from liking, to wanting, to needing alcohol, programming it for alcoholism. Alcohol can also damage the brain’s ability to sense pleasure from normal, healthy things and experiences — leaving a young person feeling “flat” about things he/she previously enjoyed.

Youth who begin drinking at age 13 have a **45% chance of becoming alcohol-dependent.**

A person who starts drinking at the legal age of 21 has only a **7% chance of becoming addicted.**

Alcohol-dependence

BASED ON AGE DRINKING STARTS



SOURCE: Grant, BF and Dawson, DA.
Journal of Substance Abuse 9:103-110, 1997

**UNDERAGE DRINKING
NEVER
HAS GOOD OUTCOMES !**