

*tips for*

# hosting a teen party



*Parents sometimes have the hard job of considering whether to allow their teen to have a party that includes alcohol*

Different families have different attitudes about teens and alcohol. Some parents prefer that their teen never use alcohol, even in adulthood. Other parents allow their children to drink small amounts as part of family traditions or cultural customs. Still other parents fall somewhere in between. Many prefer that their children delay using alcohol as long as possible. They may or may not discuss alcohol and ways to manage its use with their children.

Parents sometimes have the hard job of considering whether to allow their teen to have a party that includes alcohol, requiring them to weigh the risks and benefits. Those parents who choose to host a teen party involving alcohol can reduce the risks of harm by good planning, good supervision and fun activities that keep the focus off drinking. Here are some things to think about.

## **Talk with your teen**

If your teen asks to have a party and wants to serve alcohol, you might want to use the opportunity to have a conversation about moderation and social responsibility. Topics to explore together include the number and composition of guests, supervision, activities, transportation, and how these all relate to levels of risk. Engage your teen in the process of risk assessment and management.

## **alcohol and risk**

All alcohol use carries some risk of harm. How much risk is involved and how much harm may result depends on several factors.

**More alcohol equals more risk.** Drinking more at a time or drinking more often increases risk substantially.

**Younger age equals more risk.** The human brain is not fully formed until well into adulthood and alcohol affects the development of young brains, especially if used regularly in large amounts.

**Places, times and activities influence risk.** Unsupervised teen drinking, for example, tends to be a particularly risky activity.

# hosting a teen party

## Explore the alcohol question

There are several factors to consider before deciding whether to allow alcohol at a teen party. On the one hand, there are legal issues and, on the other, there is the question of what you might be losing by saying “no” to a gathering you could participate in with your child and supervise. If you agree to allow alcohol, discuss how saying “yes” to alcohol is not the same as saying “yes” to intoxication.

## Consult with other parents

Contact other parents to introduce the party idea and let them know if you’re considering allowing supervised drinking. Involve them in the planning and try to reach common decisions. Be sure to discuss supervision, transportation and party size.

## alcohol and the law

A parent or guardian of a minor may provide alcohol only to their child in their home. This exception does not allow for alcohol to be provided to any other minors who may be in the home. Doing so could result in a fine and legal responsibility for any damages or injury.

If alcohol is served at a party, a host could be accountable for any harm guests may experience after leaving the premises (even when the guests are of legal age to drink).

## According to Canada’s guidance on alcohol and health...

- Youth should delay using alcohol as long as possible as it can have greater effects on bodies and brains that are not yet fully matured.

## Ensure adult supervision

At least one sober adult should be present at all times during the party. If you’ve planned a large party, make sure other parents or adults are there to help out. You could assign each helper a different duty or station.

## Control numbers

Develop a clear guest list rather than an open invitation. Using invitation cards can help keep a party to a manageable size. They can even double as entry tickets for a large gathering.

## Provide entertainment

Helping your teen come up with fun activities or game ideas is a way to keep the focus away from alcohol. You could offer to put up a dart board, card table or ping-pong table. Or watch some movies, play video games or rent a karaoke machine.

## Offer food and soft drinks

Provide appropriate food throughout the party. Alcohol is absorbed more

slowly when people have food in their stomachs. Be sure to provide water, soft drinks and juices. Stop serving alcohol about two hours before the designated end of the party.

## Choose a chill out area

Think about having a place guests can go to step away from the music or loud voices. It could be a room or area with close adult supervision to ensure everyone feels secure and knows it’s okay to break away from the crowd.

## Prepare for crises

Before the party begins, it is a good idea to have a plan in place in the event something goes wrong or a guest who’s been drinking insists on driving home.

## Get them home safe

Take guests home yourself, or arrange to have them picked up by their parents. If these options aren’t possible, use a taxi service or be prepared for overnight guests.

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