

## Effects of Underage Drinking

According to "The Independent.ie", 83% of Irish teenagers as young as thirteen have consumed alcohol at least once. Sons, daughters, brothers, sisters. We are living in a society where teenagers feel it is acceptable to consume alcohol and have easy access to do so.

Starting to drink at an early age increases a person's risk of developing drinking problems in later life. According to "Drugs.ie.", if a teenager drinks before they are eighteen they are four times more likely to develop an alcohol dependency than those who wait until they are twenty one. Why would young people take such risks with their lives when the evidence is so startling?

There are many risks with consuming alcohol underage. Not only is it against the law, alcohol can also damage your physical health and mental health. According to "askaboutalcohol.ie.", drinking alcohol underage has a huge impact on your brain. When the alcohol reaches the brain it immediately affects the brain's ability to control behaviour and bodily functions. Drinking underage delays important brain development. The brain is not fully developed until we are aged twenty-five and thirty years old. Drinking before the brain is fully developed can permanently leave a person responding more slowly to things happening around them. Underage drinkers will experience difficulty with balance and coordination. They will also find it difficult to learn new things and struggle with memory. They will have long term difficulties with motivation and problem solving.

Heavy drinkers have a much higher risk of getting mouth and throat cancer. When the stomach is empty alcohol passes directly into the blood stream. According to HSE every year 900 people are diagnosed with alcohol related cancer. Women in their teens and twenties who drink regularly increase their risk of developing breast cancer by 34%. Even just one drink per day can increase a woman's risk.

Alcohol not only damages your physical health, it also damages your mental health. Alcohol abuse for teenagers can result in emotional problems such as anxiety, depression and increased rates of suicide. According to Bord Bia the more alcohol consumed the greater risk of depression.

Alcohol has a huge impact on a teenager's personal safety. A study done by researchers in NUI Galway School of Psychology found that one in six female students either knows or suspects that someone had sexual contact with them without their consent when they were drunk, drugged, incapacitated or asleep.

In conclusion I think that Ireland should have a stricter limit on the age a person can consume alcohol as when some people turn eighteen they are not mature enough to drink alcohol responsibly. I also think that there should be a limit on the amount of alcohol that can be bought in a store at one time as there is no law about the amount of alcohol you can buy but there is a limit on paracetamol. I think teenagers should be thought of the risks of drinking underage in more detail and that there should be a stricter punishment for young people who are found consuming alcohol underage.