

# MYTH BUSTING ALCOHOL



a guide for families  
with young teenagers



A program of the **Self Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC)** Inc. 140 Grange Rd, Carnegie, Victoria. Australia 3163. Phone 03 95731700



**Family Drug Helpline (03) 9573 1780  
(business hours)**

You can ring the Family Drug Helpline for:

- support and strategies for difficult situations
- the opportunity to engage with someone who understands
- referral to a support group or other services
- information & facts on alcohol and other drugs.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This booklet assists families in understanding and dealing with underage drinking. It suggests that:

**If we want our children to realise their dreams, we can actively encourage them not to drink alcohol throughout their teenage years.**

### **This booklet:**

- Provides the latest scientific research on alcohol and the developing brain
- Examines various myths and adages about alcohol
- Reveals that ignorance is not bliss  
- that knowledge is power



# Chapter 1

## ARE WE SUPPORTING A DRINKING CULTURE?

**This chapter suggests that we may be supporting a culture of alcohol that is detrimental to our children's futures.**

**What we do with our children in their very early years often has the completely opposite result to our well-meaning intentions.**

Giving toddlers sips of beer at the BBQ is considered part of our Australian culture.

*Thirty years ago I captured my father-in-law, a chemist, on video giving my 2-year old child a sip of his beer. I thought nothing of it at the time. But I would have discouraged him from giving chocolate biscuits, or any junk food. Giving kids first sips, then little drinks in their early teens, was accepted behaviour.  
(Mother & author)*

### **Start them young and they learn well**

Many sporting heroes have been practising since they were three. It's easier to learn a second language or to play a musical instrument when you're young.

**Why?** Because the brain is developing and young people are more susceptible to new ideas. The skills become second nature to them. So what does that tell us about teaching our young to drink? If we give them tastes of it early enough, does drinking become second nature to them?

## **We all want our children to realise their dreams**

Is teaching young people an appreciation of wine at an early age the same as teaching someone how to pass a football, or learn Indonesian, or play the guitar?

We know that the early plasticity of the brain develops strong brain formations to favour certain learning pathways such as language and musical skills if they are offered early enough. We help our children learn by giving them messages of support and approval. So, if we encourage our children from an early age to sip and taste alcohol, are we also giving them a strong message that drinking alcohol is also supported and approved?

**At Family Drug Help we often hear parents' stories. They don't understand why a 19 year-old is a problem drinker, or suffering health problems, when they went to so much trouble to teach them how to drink responsibly from a very early age.**

One mother was shocked to find her daughter had a fatty liver at 21, as her daughter only went out on the weekend. But her doctor revealed that her weekend bingeing was enough to cause fatty liver. Fatty liver is an early-stage liver problem related to alcohol. The daughter was only small in build and her drinking to keep up with the rest of her friends on a Saturday night had a devastating effect on her body.

The boy who was an alcoholic at 19 had been given regular little drinks of beer from age 12. He developed a taste for alcohol and the result was the development of strong drinking patterns before he was even legally old enough to drink.

### The messages from our drinking culture

#### Alcohol is a constant component of our lifestyle:

- the AFL football on grand final day used to be bounced on a beer logo
- a brewery financed the grand prix
- the Melbourne Cup, until recently, was financed by a beer company
- alcohol advertising is always associated with success and the good life
- we celebrate and mourn with alcohol

Our children are part of the communication generation; they are constantly text messaging, emailing and using the media – a level of communication that was unheard of in our time. The alcohol industry bombards them with information, promotion and advertising. It plays a major role in entrenching those early learned behaviours about the importance of alcohol in our daily lives.

**As a result, are young people drinking at a younger age, and in larger quantities, today?**

### Making it cool to binge drink

Our perception is that the alcohol industry sends the message you can't be happy or successful unless you are drinking. In Victoria, nightclubs use peer networks for pyramid selling of alcohol. Young people are enticed into clubs with free drink cards and cheap drinks as promotional tools. Some spirits are sold for as little as \$2 a drink. There is the lolly-like allure of sweet 'spirit specials'.

The system offers kudos to all the young people involved as they have their name on the door list of their chosen nightclub and so are guaranteed entry. The pyramid selling structure generates profits for the industry. Clubs are open until the early hours of the morning. **Those selling alcohol do not take responsibility for the effects of this on young people.**

#### ? What are the consequences of free and cheap drinks for young people?

They encourage teenagers to adopt binge patterns of drinking.

#### ? Is binge drinking a problem?

Binge drinking often results in violence. Long hours of drinking can lead to abnormal behaviours and outcomes.

*My son went to the pub to celebrate the last day of school before exams. He had been studying and working hard all year. He was attacked in the early hours of the morning by a youth who had been drinking all night. Instead of studying as he planned during Swot Vac, he spent the time in hospital. His exams were physically and mentally painful, as he was still in pain and not as prepared as he had hoped.  
(one mother's account)*

Young people nowadays celebrate the end of school days before and after the exams. The end of their school lives has been replaced by a whole week of partying called 'schoolies'. School dances have before and after parties which enable them to start drinking at 6pm and finish at 6am.

**Maybe we need to change our endorsement of drinking behaviour, and the age that young people begin drinking, by sending different messages.**

### **Girls binge drinking**

In Manchester, research shows that some girls go out with the intention of getting drunk. The bars name the drinks accordingly. One popular cocktail containing three standard shots of spirits is called an 'eraser'. When interviewed about drinking, young girls said that they were happy not to remember their night out the next day. Not remembering was a sign that they had had a good night.

*I recently witnessed, a young girl come up to the bar, ordered four cowboy shots and one raspberry and vodka. The barman placed them all on a tray, but the girl skulled the four shots then carried the long drink back to her table. (Jasmine)*

The short-term harm of the young girl starting out the night with four drinks in one minute might have been devastating enough but who knows what the long-term implication is of young girls drinking to that capacity? The predictions of the long-term impact of increasing alcohol consumption amongst young people of both sexes are alarming.

So, should we give our young children alcoholic drinks at home because it is safer? Don't we usually prefer openness to secrecy? But if we do this, we are sending out a strong positive message about alcohol. This tacit approval of drinking as a rite of passage supports the drinking culture.

**The research in the next chapter reveals that not only are our children starting to drink at a younger age, but they are also drinking more.**

## Chapter 2

### BUSTING MYTHS

This chapter looks at some of the myths surrounding alcoholic beverages and the act of drinking. It also provides us with a reality check.

#### Myth: alcohol peps you up

##### Reality

Alcohol is a depressant drug, not a stimulant. It slows down the activity in the central nervous system, including the brain. Depressants affect concentration and coordination, and slow the response time to unexpected situations.  
(Australian Drug Foundation, 2002)

#### Myth: bingeing is a boy thing

##### Reality

Today's girls match the boys in careers and sport and they are also matching the boys drink for drink. Traditionally, young girls didn't like the sour taste of beer but beverage manufacturers have come up with a solution - the development of 'starter drinks' for young girls, which are sweet, aerated and dangerous, 'alco pops'

Alco pops are marketed as fun, sexy and cool as if they are less risky to drink, but their health and safety consequences are anything but sexy or cool. Because of female physiology, young teenage girls (14 -16 years of age) experience greater impairment

from alcohol and encounter alcohol-related problems faster, including brain damage, cancer, cardiac complications and other medical disorders.

#### Key findings in a recent Australian medical study<sup>1</sup>

- approximately one-third of teenage girls aged 14 -16 report having tried alco pops, and one out of six has done so in the past six months
- for teenagers that have had alcoholic drinks in the past six months, girls drank more in all categories (beer, wine, alco pops and hard-liquor drinks) than boys
- nearly one in six teenage (14 to 16) girls who have drunk alco pops in the past six months have been sexually active after drinking
- one out of five teenage girls under the legal age who have tried alco pops have thrown up, or passed out, from drinking
- young people whose last drink was an alco pop report getting drunk more often than people drinking any other alcoholic beverage. This indicates that alco pops may be a specific risk factor for binge drinking among young people. Young people also report widespread concern for their friends about the unsafe level of consumption of these products

***'Alco pops taste so good that once you drink one you just can't stop.'***  
(Tegan, aged 14)

## **Myth: alcohol is a safe drug because it's legal**

### **Reality**

One young Australian aged between 14 and 17 years of age dies every week as a direct result of alcohol.<sup>2</sup>

## **Myth: what's your poison?**

### **Reality**

Alcohol can be a dangerous poison. When a person drinks enough to raise the blood alcohol to 0.2g%, (4 times the legal driving limit in Victoria) alcohol poisoning occurs. If too much alcohol is absorbed death is possible. Binge drinking can lead to alcohol poisoning. The effects of alcohol depend on the concentration of alcohol in your blood (blood alcohol level).

#### **Your blood alcohol level is affected by:**

- how much you drink
- how strong the alcohol content is
- how quickly you drink it
- how much food is in your stomach at the time you drink it

#### **Signs and symptoms of alcohol poisoning include:**

- confusion
- vomiting
- seizures

- slow or irregular breathing and snoring
- blue-tinged skin or pale
- unconsciousness ('passing out')

Alcohol is a stomach irritant and may cause vomiting. It also affects your central nervous system - slowing your breathing, heart rate and gag reflex. This increases the risk of choking on vomit if you're passed out from excessive drinking. If you suspect that someone has alcohol poisoning, seek immediate medical care. Blood alcohol level can continue to rise even after the person has passed out, which means their level of risk continues to increase.

**If you are concerned about alcohol poisoning you need to act. Try and wake a sleeping or unconscious person and call an ambulance or take them to hospital immediately.**

## **Myth: ethanol is a bad for cars but OK for our bodies**

### **Reality**

There is a myth that the addition of ethanol in our petrol will damage our car engines. **Yet we are happy to drink ethanol.** The alcohol in alcoholic beverages is ethanol. Beer, wine and spirits all contain ethanol that has been produced using fermentation. In spirits, the alcohol is further concentrated by distillation.

## Myth: alcohol won't affect your sporting performance

### Reality

Our sporting ability might be affected by just one night's drinking each week. Drinking affects hydration level, so starting a sporting event partially dehydrated from a few beers the night before will seriously affect us. For example, each 1% loss in bodyweight due to dehydration typically leads to a 2 to 3% reduction in running performance. If I am a runner, dehydration can ruin a good performance in these ways:

- my blood volume decreases, so less blood returns to the heart
- therefore the amount of blood my heart pumps with each beat decreases
- less oxygen-rich blood reaches my working muscles
- my muscles have less oxygen with which to produce energy aerobically
- therefore I must run at a slower pace

## Myth: it's safer to let them sleep it off when they've had too much

### Reality

When someone drinks a lot, or drinks rapidly, there can be a lag time before medical complications show up. Sleeping it off can disguise further progress into coma, and even death.

## Support someone who has drunk too much by:

- checking for injuries
- turning them on their side, and prop their head. This lessens the chances of choking should they vomit
- keeping them warm and give them water staying with them and check regularly for signs of alcohol poisoning
- if you have any concern at all call an ambulance or medical help

## Death from alcohol poisoning usually means the drinker died because:

- the blood alcohol level was so high that it affected parts of the brain and nervous system that controls breathing, heartbeat, and related body functions. The person died because he stopped breathing and his heart stopped beating, usually while unconscious
- they vomited while unconscious, inhaled the vomitus, and suffocated
- the alcohol reacted in combination with some other drug – over-the-counter, prescription, or illegal. These deaths can happen with a relatively low blood alcohol level



We had such a great night but I feel angry I forgot cricket practice... now I'm out of the team.

We were having such fun... but I feel so embarrassed I don't remember... I wish I didn't have to go to school anymore.



- Disrupted release of hormones necessary for growth & maturation
- Disrupted sleep impairing memory & learning
- Memory problems

- Skin problems
- Teeth decay from sugary alcopops
- Unplanned sexual encounters
- Weight problems
- Fatty liver

**Myth: changing the minimum drinking age to 21 would have no impact on underage drinking**

**Reality**

Researchers in America consider their decision to increase the minimum drinking age to 21 to be one of the most successful public safety and public health policies in United States history. “Since the minimum drinking age was increased to 21 in 1984, deaths from drinking and driving accidents have saved an estimated 20,000 young lives.”<sup>3</sup>

**A recent international study of 6000 year 9 teenagers conducted by Australian and US researchers has found rates of binge drinking are up to three times higher among Australian year 9 students compared to equivalent American teenagers. The legal drinking age is 21 in America and US attitudes tend to emphasise a zero tolerance approach.**

Findings from the first stage of the International Youth Development Study not yet published and cited in the Australian Newspaper Jan 04 2007

**Myth: cracking down on underage drinking will only make teenagers want to drink more**

**Reality**

Even though we tend to think of young people as naturally rebellious, research shows that

the great majority of teenagers respond best to clear rules, both from their parents and society at large. Studies show that underage youth are significantly less likely to drink alcohol when they believe they’ll be caught by police. They’re even less likely to drink alcohol when they believe their parents think it would be ‘very wrong’ for them to do so.<sup>4</sup>

**Myth: at least alcohol is safer than other drugs**

**Reality**

Alcohol kills 6.5 times more youth than all other illegal drugs combined.

**Myth: it’s okay as long as they don’t drive. Most teen alcohol-related deaths are from drinking and driving**

**Reality**

The drink-don’t-drive campaign is great, but the down side is that it seems to imply it is OK to drink larger quantities/binge as long as you don’t drive. Only one-third of underage drinking deaths involve traffic accidents. The remaining two-thirds involve alcohol poisoning, homicides, suicides, and unintentional injuries such as burns, drowning and falls.

**Taking away the car keys doesn’t make drinking safe.**

## Myth: teenagers are going to drink anyway - it's a rite of passage

### Reality

Contrary to popular belief, most kids *don't* drink. Research shows that believing that 'everybody's doing it' actually makes young people more likely to drink alcohol. On the other hand, when these misperceptions are corrected, and kids realise that 'NOT everybody's doing it,' they are less likely to drink alcohol.

## Myth: teaching young people how to drink will stop them becoming problem drinkers

### Reality

Young people who begin drinking before age 17 are twice as likely to develop alcohol dependence as those who begin drinking at age 21. Those who begin by age 15 are more than four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence.

## Myth: only alcoholics have alcohol related health problems

### Reality

Alcohol affects everybody, occasional drinkers, binge drinkers, as well as alcoholics. Young people bingeing can suffer from fatty liver, weight gain, teeth problems (especially related to the sweet mixer drinks such as alco pops) and skin problems.

## Myth: blackouts are the same as passing out

### Reality

During a blackout, young people under the influence of alcohol are fully active. When they are passed out they are unconscious, inert. Blackouts can occur frequently among social drinkers, including young drinkers. While often confused with passing out or losing consciousness after excessive drinking, **blackouts do not involve a loss of consciousness.** Young people can engage in a wide range of often complicated behaviours during blackouts, from driving cars to having sexual intercourse, getting into a fight, damaging property, but unfortunately have no memory of it the next morning.

Memory loss is caused by drinking large amounts of alcohol quickly. The liver cannot process it fast enough so it diverts it to the brain through the bloodstream. The alcohol causes a breakdown in the brain's capacity to take short term memory and store it in the long term memory bank. This is the reason why, after a blackout, you do not remember the previous night.

**If recreational drugs were tools, alcohol would be a sledgehammer to the brain, capable of creating amnesia.**

# Chapter 3

## KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

This chapter explains the impact of alcohol on the developing brain. It also busts the myth – what we don't know can't hurt us.

### Fact one

 **Alcohol kills developing brain cells**

**The brain does not finish developing for males until around 24, and for females around 22 years.** We know the adolescent brain is designed to learn, but this plasticity also renders it particularly vulnerable to the damaging effects of alcohol.

Research reveals that the brain goes through dynamic changes during adolescence and that alcohol intake can seriously damage long and short-term growth processes during this time. In the short-term, moderate drinking impairs learning and memory far more in youth than in adults.

Since the development of MRI (multiple resonance imaging) scientists are able to measure changes in the brain, and provide new insights into what actually happens to the brain, under the influence of alcohol. New research has provided more information on young people and their developing brains. In line with such research, it is no accident that

some western countries e.g. America have set the age of 21 as the legal age to drink.

**Source:** Brown SA& Tapert SF 2004 "Adolescence and the trajectory of alcohol use: basic to clinical studies." Annals of the New York Academy of sciences, 1021 234-44"

### Fact two

 **Early alcohol use can cause a change in brain wiring**

Young people are quick to learn. While their brains are still developing, they are developing new pathways. These brain pathways can change negatively in response to alcohol at this particularly vulnerable time, possibly hard-wiring the brain with a predisposition to crave alcohol.

*'This change in the wiring of the brain indicates that early exposure to alcohol somehow changes the reward pathway so this adolescent, as an adult, finds alcohol more rewarding than do those adults who did not drink as adolescents. That strong reward feeling can lead to alcohol abuse problems'*

**Source:** Dr Jamie Diaz –Granados Associate professor and interim chair of the psychology and neuroscience department at Baylor.

### Fact three



#### Alcohol can disrupt the ability to learn life skills

*The adolescent brain is a work in progress, according to Dr Peter Monti, it is often referred to as plastic because it is built to acquire information, adapt, and learn.*

**Alcohol, however, can disrupt the adolescent brain's ability to learn life skills.**

*So, not only can heavy drinking at this time get the adolescent into trouble through behaviour, such as risk taking, or drinking and driving, but it can also make the brain less able to learn important life skills that can help one avoid trouble as an adult.*

#### **The earlier a person starts drinking:**

- **the greater the risk of altering the development of the brain**
- **the greater the risk of alcohol problems.**

**Source:** Dr Peter Monti, Symposium organiser, and professor of medical sciences and director of the Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies at Brown University.

### Fact four



#### Alcohol affects teenagers' ability to achieve at school

**Alcohol can cause severe and possibly lasting brain damage in people under the age of 21.** A recent US study compared the brains of those who drank alcohol aged 14 - 21 with those who did not drink.

#### **Teenagers who drank alcohol:**

- had smaller areas of that part of the brain that handles memory and learning
- had damage to the section of the brain used to make decisions and to reason
- scored worse on vocabulary, visual-spatial tests (the ability to think in pictures and images), and memory tests
- performed more poorly in school, were more likely to fall behind and have increased risk of social problems, depression, suicidal thoughts and violence
- suffered a change to their sleep cycle, resulting in impaired learning and memory as well as disrupted release of hormones necessary for growth and maturation
- had a 10% decrease in verbal and non-verbal information recall
- may have difficulties in attaining the goals of adulthood

**Source:** (AMI) American Medical Association's report on alcohol's adverse effects on the brains of children, adolescents and college students updated 2004

## Fact five

### **Alcohol takes a greater toll on brain development in those under 21 than in any other age group**

- Adults would have to consume twice as many drinks to suffer the same brain damage as teenagers; even one heavy drinking session can injure young brains
- young people do not tolerate the effects of alcohol better than adults, even if youthful stamina enables them to stay up all night drinking when we oldies would be in bed
- teenagers (who drink) are more likely to suffer from lack of judgement and memory loss
- this is of great concern because some children now try alcohol for the first time as young as 12 years old, and data reveals that most young Australians have tried alcohol by the time they are 16

**Source:** ADF fact sheet The affects of alcohol on the developing brain Number 3.12 Feb 2005

## Fact six

### **There is a strong connection between alcohol consumption, self-harm, and suicide**

- If we drink too much, too regularly, we are more likely to become depressed
- There is evidence that alcohol changes the

chemistry of the brain itself and that this increases the risk of depression

- hangovers create a cycle of waking up feeling ill, anxious, jittery, and guilty
- regular drinking can cause family arguments and result in poor work output, unreliable memory, and sexual problems

**Source:** Royal College of Psychiatrists' Public education Editorial Board Dr Phillip Timm Editor updated July 2006

## Fact seven

### **Double trouble**

The brain does not fully develop until the mid 20s. In young people, that part of the brain that controls judgment and behaviour is not properly developed. Accordingly, teenagers often engage in risk-taking behavior without having consumed alcohol. Our teenagers are faced with double trouble when they drink alcohol. When these double-trouble situations arise, the police, or worse still the ambulance, is often required.

**Source:** Family Drug Help

## Fact eight

### **Parents can influence the drinking patterns of their children**

- a. Parents do have the capacity to set effective rules and parenting practices that could delay the age at which their children would begin using alcohol
- b. By setting rules and monitoring alcohol

use in the home parents can have a direct positive influence

c. Among the students aged 12 –15 years responding to a survey, 42 % reported parents as the most common source for obtaining alcohol <sup>4</sup>

d. The longer we delay the age teenagers are allowed to drink alcohol at home, the greater the chance that our teenagers will use alcohol moderately as adults

ADF. Australian Drug Foundation. Prevention research evaluation report. Number 13 February

### Fact nine

✓ **Parents who allow their children small amounts of alcohol in an attempt to instil safe drinking habits maybe setting them on the path to becoming binge drinkers**

*“There is no protective effect from giving children alcohol.”  
“Explain to children that alcohol is harmful, and make a rule that children will not be allowed to drink until they reach the legal age. Right through high school that needs to be the message and communities need to back parents with that message.”*

**Source:** Associate Professor John Toumbourou from the Centre of Adolescent Health at Melbourne’s Murdoch Childrens Research Institute quoted in the Australian Newspaper January 2007

### Now consider the evidence

- ✓ Australia has higher rates of alcohol related brain injury than other western countries. The prevalence of alcohol-related brain injury in the general population in Australia is over 2%.  
**Source:** Department of Human Services ABI ‘Acquired Brain Injury’ Strategic Plan 2001)
- ✓ The younger a person starts drinking alcohol the higher their risk for alcohol dependence later in life
- ✓ Drinking alcohol before the brain has finished developing (minimum age 21) can cause damage to the areas of the brain responsible for learning and memory
- ✓ The first thing alcohol affects in teenagers is judgment, remember **double trouble?**
- ✓ The three leading causes of injury and death for teenagers unintentional injuries, homicides and suicides all involve alcohol
- ✓ A survey by Australia’s Cancer Council estimates that 20% of 16 and 17-year-olds drink to excess. Many other teenagers consume alcohol far less frequently, but when they do they tend to binge. Doctors have warned that this can lead to heart complaints and brain damage

# Chapter 4

## STING IN THE TAIL

This chapter asks - how can we as parents behave in ways that reduce the risk to our children? The reality is our children learn more from observing our behaviour than anything else we can do.

We present a case study here of a group who considered themselves responsible adults. Four couples tested and analysed their assumptions and behaviour about alcohol. Let's call them Bob and Lorraine; Tracey and Matt; Cameron and Lisa; and Brian and Liz. Their sobering research exploded many myths when they tested their Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) at the end of a dinner party before driving home.

### Myth 1

**If your wife only has a few drinks then it's safer for her to drive home**

### Myth 2

**One drink equals one standard drink**

### Myth 3

**Just because you have always done it means it must be OK**

### Myth 4

**One standard drink affects everyone the same**

#### Reality check question:

**should Lorraine, Tracey, Lisa and Liz all drive their partners home?**

### Couple one: Bob and Lorraine

Lorraine thought she had drunk three drinks in three hours. Bob reported he drank six drinks in the same time.

#### *The real facts once investigated were:*

- 1. Lorraine weighed around 50 kilos, Bob about 90 kilos*
- 2. Lorraine skipped lunch that day. That first glass of champagne hit an empty stomach; there was no food to absorb the alcohol. Alcohol competes with food in the stomach for absorption into the bloodstream so if there is no food then it enters more quickly into the system*
- 3. Bob ate lunch and then a sandwich before he left to go out for dinner*
- 4. Lorraine's flute of champagne was actually the equivalent of one and a half standard glasses. The three drinks blew out to four drinks*

**Lorraine had a BAC content of .07. Bob had a BAC of .02. The male drank twice as much but registered third the reading (so much for equality).**

### Couple Two: Tracey and Matt

Again the male (Matt) blew under the limit and the female (Tracey) was just over .05. Tracey only had two drinks. Matt had more but was under the legal driving limit. Yet, for the past 20 years he has been giving her the keys to drive home believing that he would be over the limit and she under.

## Standard Drink Guide

### Couple three: Cameron and Lisa

They were planning to drive home. They had drinks with other friends at the golf club before they came to dinner. The breathalyser reading showed readings of .2 for Lisa and .1 for Cameron. They were not safe to drive.

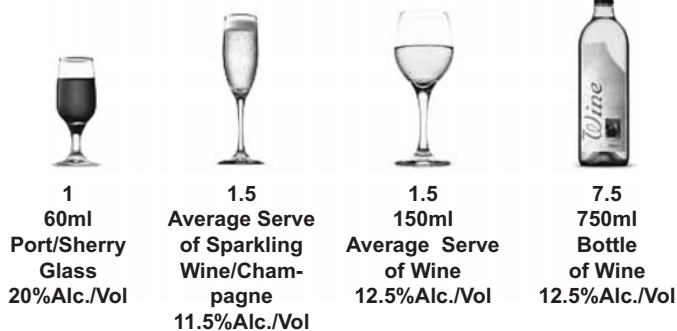
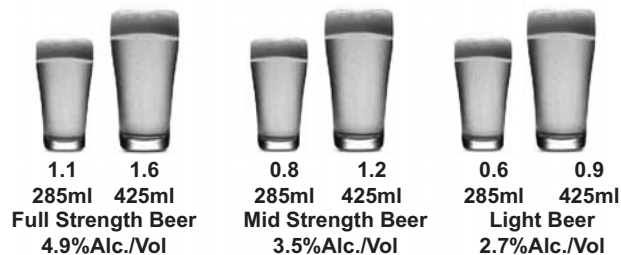
### Couple four: Brian and Liz

Both blew around .1. Brian drank about the same as Liz but Brian was on medication (something to consider). Both medication and the different stages in the menstrual cycle can increase the BAC reading.

**Question: Who should drive home?**

**Answer: The only person who should drive home is Bob. He is under the legal limit of .05 & not taking medication.**

- Everyone has a different BAC reading based on their size, gender & health. A woman has 10% less water in blood than a male to dilute the alcohol, so women are more susceptible to alcohol
- BAC is not the only factor in impairment from alcohol. Another element in the equation is a mix of drugs – alcohol with other forms (over-the-counter, prescription or illegal)
- Adults often act according to myths and misconceptions about alcohol and its effects. If we want to influence young people, being aware of the impact of alcohol on ourselves is a good place to start



Note. Labels on alcoholic drink containers state the number of Standard Drinks in the container. Check the label to find out how many Standard Drinks are in the bottle or can. The Standard Drinks shown are calculated to one decimal place. To make counting your drinks easier, you can round the numbers up or down. For example count 0.9 as 1.0 and 1.6 as 1.5.

## **The GOOD news**

**Parents have the capacity to set effective rules and parenting practices, to delay the age our children begin using alcohol. The longer that we delay alcohol use among our children, the better it is for them.**

## **CONCLUSION**

**If we want our children to realise their dreams we can actively encourage them not to drink alcohol throughout their teenage years.**

### **Breathalyser for Loan**

If you're having a social gathering and interested in educating your guests with a blood alcohol reading before they depart, ring or email to [fdh@sharc.org.au](mailto:fdh@sharc.org.au)  
Office hours are Mon to Fri 9 am to 5 pm.  
Melbourne and Interstate callers  
(03) 95731780  
Country Victorian callers - 1300 660 068.

### **Endnotes**

- 1 The Australian Division of General Practice – December 2003 'Alco pops and youth binge drinking'
- 2 National Alcohol Indicators Bulletin No 7 November 2004 'Underage drinking among 14-17 year olds and related harm' Curtin University of technology
- 3 Wendy J. Hamilton, National President, Mothers Against Drunk Driving  
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Subcommittee on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services. Hearing on Underage Drinking September 30, 2003
- 4 ADF. Australian Drug Foundation. Prevention research evaluation report. Number 13 February 2005