

## Advice for Parents & Caregivers

### Alcohol Explained



## **Before we start**

Because alcohol is legal and familiar, it can be hard to know when to worry. If it's on your mind, that's worth listening to.

This guide isn't here to shame or exaggerate. It's here to help you understand how alcohol affects young people today, and where harm can quietly build.

## **Who this guide is for**

This is for parents and carers who want clear, grounded information about alcohol, and practical ways to reduce harm through calm, open conversations rather than judgement.

## **Why this matters**

Alcohol causes more injuries, emergencies, and long-term harm than most illegal drugs. Because it is socially accepted, its risks are often underestimated.

## **What alcohol is**

Alcohol is a depressant that affects the brain and nervous system. It lowers inhibition, slows reaction time, and impairs judgement and coordination.

## **What alcohol does**

Alcohol can temporarily lower anxiety and increase confidence. As more is consumed, it increases the risk of accidents, aggression, memory loss, and loss of consciousness.

After drinking, people may feel anxious, low in mood, struggle to sleep, or find it harder to concentrate.

## What we see in real life

In real life, alcohol harm rarely looks dramatic at first. It often builds through patterns that feel normal because drinking is woven into social life.

**Access and normalisation:** Alcohol is easy to obtain and widely accepted. Because 'everyone drinks', risky behaviour can be brushed off as typical rather than a sign of harm.

**How it's commonly used:** Many young people drink in short, intense bursts. Binge drinking can lead to rapid loss of control, accidents, blackouts, and risky decisions without obvious warning beforehand.

**Why it slips under the radar:** Hangovers, poor sleep, mood swings, and anxiety are often treated as normal side effects rather than indicators of harm building over time.

**The hidden risks:** Alcohol increases the risk of injury, violence, and unsafe situations. Mixing alcohol with other drugs, including cocaine, ketamine, or benzodiazepines, greatly increases danger, especially the risk of collapse or breathing problems.

**Why early conversations matter:** Talking calmly about pacing, limits, and mixing substances can reduce harm far more than focusing on individual nights or punishments.

## What's changed and what people often miss

Drinking patterns have shifted towards binge drinking and mixing alcohol with other substances. Stronger drinks and social pressure can increase harm quickly.

## Why harm happens

Harm often comes from loss of control, dehydration, poor judgement, and mixing alcohol with other drugs such as cocaine, ketamine, or benzodiazepines.

## How to talk to your child about this

Focus on patterns and impact rather than individual nights. Keep conversations calm and centred on health and safety rather than blame.

## Peer pressure and the need to fit in

Because alcohol is normalised, young people may feel pressure to drink to belong or avoid standing out. This can make risky behaviour feel expected rather than optional.

## When to be concerned

Loss of control, drinking to cope, repeated risky behaviour, physical health symptoms, or pulling away from support networks are signs it's time to seek advice. Trust patterns over single moments.

## A final note

Something being legal does not make it harmless. Staying calm, informed, and available reduces harm more than confrontation ever will.

Educational use only. Not medical advice. If someone is unwell or at risk, seek professional medical help or call 999 in an emergency.