**Underage drinking**

**Advice if you're worried your teen is drinking too much**

On average, UK children have their first alcoholic drink at 13 and, by just over 14, hundreds have been drunk for the first time.\* A survey of 15 and 16 year olds carried out recently by the Drinkaware Trust\*\* revealed that:

* 60% regard drinking as a normal part of growing up
* half of all 11 to 15-year-olds have already tried at least one alcoholic drink with their friends
* half of 16 and 17 years olds drink at least once a week

Aside from the health risks associated with underage drinking, drinking to get drunk - as many teens do - means huge numbers are risking their [sexual health](http://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/sex/teenagers-having-sex/). Experts say 14 and 15 year olds who drink are more likely to engage in sexual activity - with 11% of 15 to 16 year olds admitting to unprotected sex while drunk.

These are not the only problems. Chris Soreks of Drinkaware says: "There are strong links between drinking high levels of alcohol and [youth offending](http://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/behaviour/what-to-do-if-your-teen-gets-arrested/), [teenage pregnancy](http://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/sex/teenage-pregnancy/), [truancy](http://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/school-learning/truancy/)and exclusion from school." Nearly half of all 10 to 17 years olds who drink once a week or more admit to some sort of criminal activity or disorderly behaviour, around two-thirds get into an argument and about a fifth get into a fight.

And despite age restrictions, 10% of 12 to 15 years-olds say they buy their own alcohol, according to the Institute of Alcohol Studies. 63% of 16-17 year olds have bought their own booze in pubs, nightclubs and bars. Beer and lager are the most popular drinks among under 18s, with spirits, wine and alcopops (such as WKD or Barcardi Breezers) also popular.

Q. What percentage of 11-15 year olds have tried alcohol with their friends?

Q. What percentage of 16 and 17 year olds drink at least once a week?

Q. What percentage of 15 to 16 year olds have admitted to unprotected sex while drunk?

Q. What four problems might occur with children who drink high levels of alcohol regularly?

Challenge: why do you think alcopops are popular amongst underage drinkers?