

Alcohol: Officer Reference Sheet

LESSON 4

Product Names:

Beer, gin, vodka, bourbon, whiskey, tequila, liqueurs, wine, brandy, champagne, rum, sherry, port, coolers, “lab punch”

Slang Terms:

Booze, Sauce, Brews, Brewskis, Hooch, Hard Stuff, Juice

Effects of Alcohol on Your Brain

- Drinking alcohol leads to a loss of coordination, poor judgment, slowed reflexes, distorted vision, memory lapses, and even blackouts.

Other Health Effects of Alcohol

- Alcohol affects your body. Alcohol can damage every organ in your body. It is absorbed directly into your bloodstream and can increase your risk for a variety of life-threatening diseases, including cancer.
- Alcohol affects your self-control. Alcohol depresses your central nervous system, lowers your inhibitions, and impairs your judgment.
- Alcohol can kill you. Drinking large amounts of alcohol can lead to coma or even death.
- In 1998, 35.8 percent of traffic deaths of 15- to 20- year-olds were alcohol-related.
- Alcohol can hurt you – even if you’re not the one drinking. If you’re around people who are drinking, you have an increase risk of being seriously injured, involved in car crashes, or affected by violence. At the very least, you may have to deal with people who are sick, out of control, or unable to take care of themselves.
- Habitual use can lead to an inability to control drinking, high tolerance level, blackouts, and memory loss, interference with personal relationships, cirrhosis of the liver, vitamin deficiencies, damage to heart and central nervous system, sexual impotence, and weight gain.

Facts About Alcohol Use

- It is illegal to buy or possess alcohol if you are under the age of 21 years old.
- One drink can make you fail a breath test. In some states, people under the age of 21 who are found to have any amount of alcohol in their systems can lose their driver’s license, be subject to a heavy fine, or have their car permanently taken away.
- “Binge” drinking means having five or more drinks on one occasion. About 15 percent of teens are binge drinkers in any given month.

- Mixing alcohol with medications or illicit drugs is extremely dangerous and can lead to accidental death. For example, alcohol-medication interactions may be a factor in at least 25 percent of emergency room admissions.
- Alcohol can make you gain weight and give you bad breath.
- Most teens aren't drinking alcohol. Research shows that 70 percent of people 12-20 haven't had a drink in the past month.

How Can You Tell if a Friend Has a Drinking Problem? Sometimes it's tough to tell. But there are signs you can look for. If your friend has one or more of the following warning signs, he or she may have a problem with alcohol:

- Getting drunk on a regular basis.
- Lying about how much alcohol he or she is using.
- Believing that alcohol is necessary to have fun.
- Having frequent hangovers.
- Feeling run-down, depressed, or even suicidal.
- Having "blackouts" – forgetting what he or she did while drinking.
- Having problems at school or getting in trouble with the law.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Aren't beer and wine "safer" than hard liquor?

A. No. One 12-ounce beer has about the same amount of alcohol as a 1.5-ounce shot of hard liquor, a 5-ounce glass of wine, or a wine cooler.

Q. Why can't teens drink if their parents can?

A. Teens' bodies are still developing and alcohol has a greater impact on their physical and mental well-being. For example, people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcoholism than those who begin at age 21.

Q. How can I say no to alcohol? I'm afraid I won't fit in.

A. Remember, you're in good company. The majority of teens don't drink alcohol. Also, it's not as hard to refuse as you might think. Try: "No thanks," "I don't drink," or "I'm not interested."

NCADI Tips for Teens – Alcohol

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, "Keeping Youth Drug Free" 2002.