



PROJECT YOUTH WELLNESS

**WEEK 7: SUBSTANCE USE AND MEDICAL
HEALTH RISKS**

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ALCOHOL: PUBLIC HEALTH INDICATORS

The truth is that alcohol is dangerous when consumed in large quantities - this is called **binge drinking**, which typically means *consuming five or more drinks at one time for a man, or four or more drinks at one time for a woman*. **Most youth (90%) who use alcohol under the age of 21 in the United States do so in the form of binge drinking.**

Why is this concerning? Because alcohol is a primary factor in each of the leading causes of death among young people:

- Accidents (car crashes, falls, drownings, poisoning)
- Assaults and homicides (violence and injury)
- Suicide

Alcohol is a major cause of *risky* sexual behavior, including

- Unwanted, unintended pregnancy
- Unprotected sexual activity
- Sexually transmitted infections

Alcohol Poisoning

A night out drinking with friends can turn into a scary situation when alcohol is over-consumed. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, "**Alcohol poisoning** occurs when there is so much alcohol in the bloodstream that areas of the brain controlling basic life support functions—such as breathing, heart rate, and temperature control—begin to shut down" (NIDA, 2020).

Life-threatening signs of alcohol poisoning include

- Inability to wake up
- Vomiting
- Slow breathing (fewer than eight breaths per minute)
- Irregular breathing (10 seconds or more between breaths)
- Seizures
- Hypothermia (low body temperature—signs are bluish skin color and paleness)

IF YOU THINK SOMEONE MAY BE SUFFERING FROM ALCOHOL POISONING, GET HELP IMMEDIATELY AND CALL 911.



FACT CHECK: Did you know that alcohol is a drug? According to the Governors Highway Safety Association, "43.6 percent of fatally injured drivers in 2016 tested positive for drugs and over half of those drivers were positive for two or more drugs." Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens, so one way of preventing them is by avoiding drugs (including alcohol) before operating a vehicle.

Source: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/drugged-driving>

Sources: <https://www.drugfreeworld.org/drugfacts/alcohol/what-is-binge-drinking.html>

https://www.cdc.gov/transportationsafety/teen_drivers/teendrivers_factsheet.html

NIDA (2020). Alcohol Overdose: The Dangers of Drinking Too Much. <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/sites/default/files/publications/overdoseFact.pdf>

STD SCREENING AND YOUR HEALTH

Your health should always be your highest priority. This is because, by making health goals and staying on top of them, you can prevent many health problems! One health area everyone should stay on top of at your age is sexual/reproductive health—specifically, preventing, getting screened, and/or managing sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). An STD is a disease/infection you can get from or give to someone else through sexual contact.

How do you protect yourself and others from getting an STD? Here are 7 ways to prevent the spread of STDs.

1



Limit your number of sex partners. The more people you have sex with, the greater your chances of getting an STD. A **monogamous relationship**—where you and your partner only have sex with each other **is safest.**



If you **suspect that you or your partner has an STD, go to a doctor or a clinic to get tested as soon as possible.** Get treated by a doctor if you have an STD, and make sure both you and your partner(s) get treated. **Do not have sex again until both you and your partner(s) complete treatment.** Keep in mind that many STDs do not show any signs or symptoms.

2



If you have sex, **use a latex condom correctly** each time. Talk to your doctor about other options.

3



Talk to your partner(s) about safe sex before having sex. Try to select a setting that is neutral and non-sexual, **then discuss your sexual histories,** including past sex partners and STDs.

5



Go to a clinic for an **STD checkup every six months** if you change partners, have more than one partner, or if you think your partner may be having sex with anyone else.

6



Talk to your doctor or go to a clinic to find out about **vaccines that prevent the spread of STDs.**

7



Do not share needles for tattooing, body piercing, and injecting drugs/hormones. Ask your sex partner(s) about any past needle use.

The best way to know if you have an STD is to go to a doctor and get tested. If you live in Los Angeles County and are at least 12 years old or older, you can call the STD Hotline at (800) 758-0880 to find out where you can get tested and treated for free. The hotline can also help you with telling your partner(s).