

## Teen Binge Drinking<sup>1</sup>

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*Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life.*



Credits: George Doyle

Raising teenagers is a tough job. I know I'm not the only mom who worries about the challenges our children face, including the issue of teenage drinking. There are many reasons to be concerned: Youth who use alcohol are at greater risk for unprotected sexual intercourse, coerced sexual activity, use of marijuana, and poor academic performance (Child Trends, <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/indicators/2BingeDrinking.cfm>). Alarmingly, in 2002 nearly one-third of all traffic

deaths among youth ages 15 to 20 were alcohol-related. And then there are the long-term health problems of binge drinking--including cancer, liver, pancreatic and cardiovascular diseases, gastrointestinal problems, neurological disorders and reproductive system disorders" (Child Trends, <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/indicators/2BingeDrinking.cfm>).

The good news is that recent studies show that binge drinking has been declining among eighth and tenth graders "from 15 percent of eighth graders in 1999 to 11 percent in 2005 and [from] 26 percent of tenth graders in 2000 to 21 percent in 2005." However, "the rate for twelfth graders has remained at 28 percent" (Child Trends, <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/indicators/2BingeDrinking.cfm>).

Parents who are concerned about their teenager's drinking can monitor a teen's drinking behavior and be aware of their friends drinking behavior as well. They can communicate with their teens about the risks of drinking and make their views clear. Parents may also need to look at their own drinking behavior and see what it communicates to their teens,

1. This document is FAR362, one of a series of the Family Youth and Community Sciences Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Broadcast as program 396 in January 2007. Published on EDIS August 2012. In the interest of time and/or clarity, the broadcast version of this script may have been modified. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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as “parents’ drinking behavior and favorable attitudes about drinking have been positively associated with adolescents’ initiating and continuing drinking” (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1997: <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa37.htm>).

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