

## Prom, Graduation and Summer Vacation: Can Be a Dangerous Season for Teens



Of all the alcohol-related fatalities involving teens each year, about one-third of them take place during April, May and June - prom and graduation season. **According to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) statistics that means approximately 1,000 children under the age 21 die each year in preventable tragedies while celebrating their high school proms and graduations.** Therefore, efforts to prevent [underage drinking](#), particularly at prom-graduation time, is critical, public health officials say.

A survey conducted by The Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility (formerly The Century Council) revealed that more than half of the respondent's ages 13-20 years old reported they are drinking alcoholic beverages.

### Many Teens Get Alcohol from Parents

Even more disturbing than the fact that youth are consuming alcohol illegally is their source -- 52 percent of those same 13-20 year olds reported they get the alcohol that they drink [from their parents or their friends' parents](#). Moreover, in a similar survey, when asked about discussing the dangers of drinking alcohol, parents' perception of speaking with their children varies significantly from the perception of youth. Three-quarters of parents (74 percent) report they spoke with their son or daughter about the [dangers of drinking alcohol](#) within the past week or month. However, only 24 percent of teens report their parents have never spoken with them about the dangers of drinking alcohol.

### TO-DO List

It's no secret that peer pressure exists and teens do not want to look "uncool" so come up with a plan to help your teen remove themselves from the situation.

- **Create a signal** – When your teen responds with a phrase or code, or sends you a message using that phrase or code, you know they need to come home. Call them or send them a text indicating an emergency or they are in trouble for something and make it "your fault" they have to leave.
- **Send text reminders** – keep in contact with your teen, sending texts such as "Hope you are having a good time" or "Just wanted you to know I am here" or even "stay safe, make good choices" gives them an opportunity to respond and ask for help.
- **Set clear rules and consequences** – Be sure your teen knows what you expect of them and that there will be consequences if they drink, drink and drive, use drugs etc.
- **Show them** – Teens often learn by example. If their parents drink and drive, smoke cigarettes, do drugs, or text and drive etc. chances are your teen will too. Be an example for your teen, you are their first teacher.
- **Build Trust** – Let your teen know that if they do use alcohol or other drugs, or just need a ride home at 2:00am that they can call/text you 24/7 and no questions will be asked at that time. A discussion can take place the next day when your teen is home "safe."

## Keep Lines of Communication Open

"Prom and graduation season is a time for celebration," says Susan Molinari, former Chairman of The Century Council. "Unfortunately, these happy occasions sometimes involve [underage drinking](#) which can result in tragedy. It is no secret that children under 21 years old are drinking. It is therefore critical that parents keep the lines of communication open when it comes to talking to their kids about the dangers of underage drinking and drunk driving."

## Other Factors to Consider

Many teenagers are just getting their first taste of freedom. These freedoms may include staying out later because there is no school the next day; Maybe they are working a night job or long hours in the hot sun; Perhaps their best friend is home for college or leaving to move out of state; Maybe they turned 18 and got their first new sports car, these are all risks that could put your teen and others in harm's way.

Parents be diligent in talking with your teens, not only encouraging safe and appropriate behavior but modeling it as well. Teens tend to mimic the behaviors of those around them – if you text and drive, eat and drive, drive fast, drive tired or use substances such as alcohol or drugs it is likely your teen will too.

Some sections taken from Prom and Graduation Time Dangerous Season for Teens by Buddy T.

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