

# The Real Buzz: Teens & Alcohol



Drinking alcohol can have an effect on your brain development. Your brain keeps developing until you're at least 25, and alcohol can harm that process.

## Get this:

Drinking alcohol while your brain is still developing can cause permanent damage. This can lead to issues with decision making and controlling impulses. Avoiding alcohol can actually help protect your brain while it's growing.

### PARIETAL LOBE:

**Alcohol harms include:**

- Decreased reaction time

### OCCIPITAL LOBE:

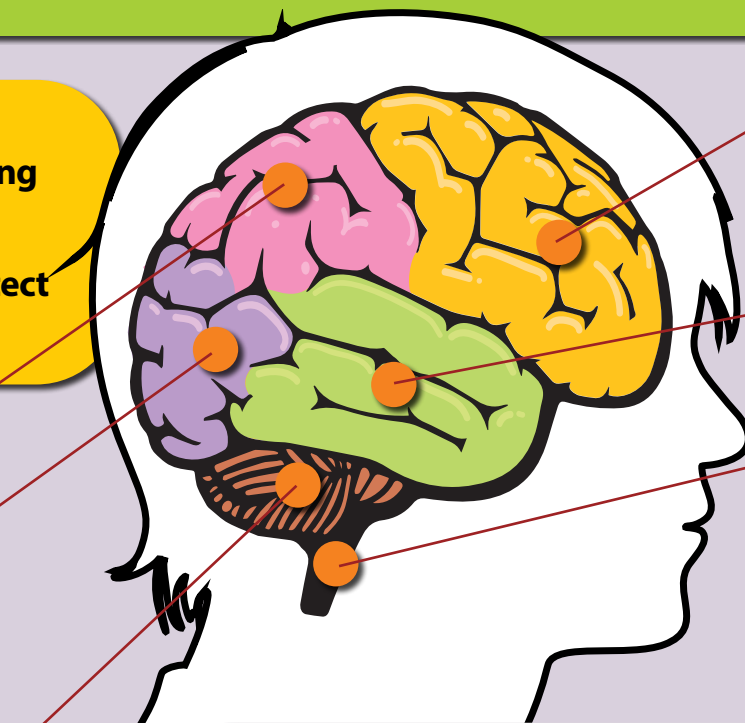
**Alcohol harms include:**

- Blurred vision and impaired peripheral vision

### CEREBELLUM:

**Alcohol harms include:**

- Impaired balance and coordination



### PREFRONTAL CORTEX:

**Alcohol harms include:**

- Bad decision making
- Impaired emotional control

### TEMPORAL LOBE:

**Alcohol harms include:**

- Slurred speech

### BRAIN STEM:

**Alcohol harms include:**

- Changes to heart rate
- Blacking out
- Slow/shallow breathing (can lead to death)

## Why might teenagers drink?

- Just curious, wanting to try something new
- To feel happy or relaxed
- To fit in with friends or because they feel pressured
- To handle tough times or stress at home or school
- Thinking wrongly that "everyone is doing it" in their group of friends or at home (Not true!!! They aren't")
- Seeing ads and promotions about drinking can make it seem normal for teens



## Alcohol use risks:

- Fights or assaults
- Having unwanted sex
- Mental health issues
- Blackouts, hangovers, getting sick or risk of alcohol poisoning
- Possible choking or even stopping breathing, which can be fatal
- Risk of injuries or death from driving, biking, boating, etc.
- Hurting others through accidents or neglect
- School issues, increased dropout risk
- Higher risk of certain diseases, like cancer
- Can hurt friendships, family relationships & school performance. Try non-drinking activities instead!

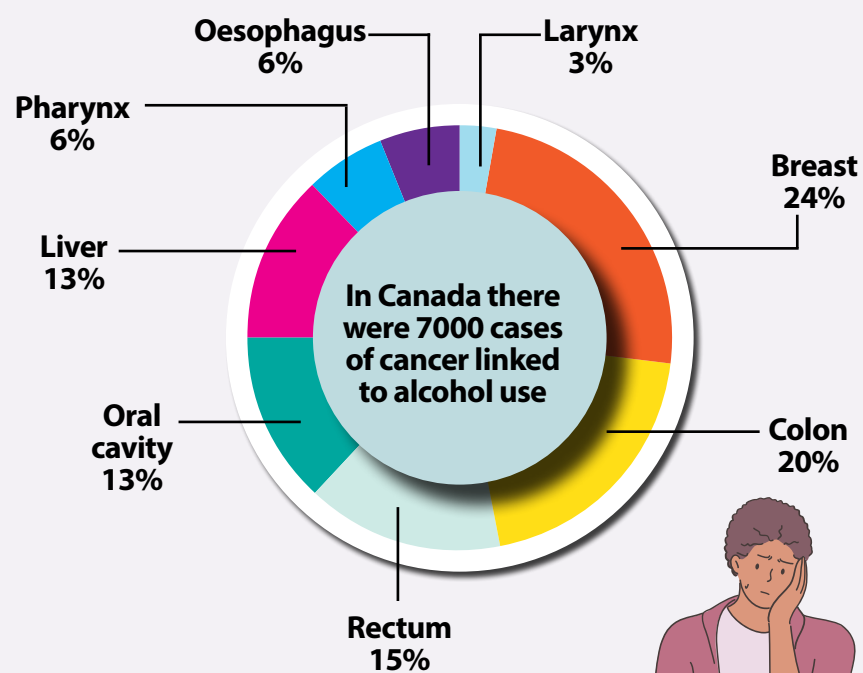


## Refusing to drink:

- **Offer another activity** - "No, thanks. Let's grab a bite, I'm starving."
- **Exit** - Walk away or leave the place
- **Push back** - "If you care, you won't pressure me."
- **Be humorous** - "I'm fun already. I don't need alcohol!"
- **Ignore the offer** - Don't answer that text
- **Make an excuse** - "My mom just texted, I have to go now."
- **Shift blame** - "Are you trying to get me in trouble?"
- **Get help** - "Guys, back me up. I said 'no,' but he's persistent."
- **Switch topics** - "No thanks. Seen any good movies lately?"



## Alcohol consumption and cancer in Canada



Adapted from World Health Organization, International Agency for Research on Cancer, 2020



## Top 10 Ways to Eliminate Stress

1. **Meditate** - Calms your mind and brings perspective
2. **Breathe deeply** - Eases stress-triggered changes in your body
3. **Practice mindfulness** - Use your senses to stay grounded
4. **Use affirmations** - Repeat calming mantras
5. **Exercise** - Move your body for natural stress relief
6. **Listen to music** - Your go-to tunes can help you relax
7. **Keep a gratitude journal** - Shifts focus to positive aspects of life
8. **Help others** - Improves mood and distracts from personal worries
9. **Sleep well** - Restful sleep enhances your ability to handle stress
10. **Seek support** - If stress and alcohol use feel overwhelming, ask for help



| Adapted from: Psychology Today, April 2 2019

## Get Help/Resources

For support, you can talk to your teacher, Principal, or guidance counselor at school or [kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca)



Durham Health Connection Line | 1-800-841-2729 or 905-668-2020  
[durham.ca/schools](http://durham.ca/schools)  
 If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

