

ALCOHOL & THE TEENAGE BODY

The Heart

- During intoxication, adolescents may experience low heart rate and blood pressure.
- Long-term chronic use may result in cardiomyopathy, a weakness of the heart muscles, and hypertension.

The Blood

- Chronic alcohol use may result in anemia, or low blood count, due to blood loss from bleeding and inflammation of the stomach lining, as well as nutrient and vitamin deficiency.
- Low platelets from alcohol's toxic effect on the bone marrow can result in easy bruising and bleeding.

The Liver

- Alcohol is broken down in the liver. Excessive alcohol abuse has been linked to alcoholic hepatitis, fatty liver and cirrhosis, or scarring of the liver.
- Symptoms include abdominal pain, jaundice (yellow skin and eyes), bloated stomach and vomiting of blood.

The Pancreas

- Chronic alcohol use can result in pancreatitis, a toxic inflammation of the pancreas, which can lead to weight loss and malnutrition. Symptoms of pancreatitis include nausea, vomiting and pain when eating.

The Brain

- Alcohol slows all brain function. Since adolescent brains are still developing, this can lead to a decrease in thinking ability.
- Learning disabilities can result from damage to the hippocampus – the part of the brain responsible for learning and memory.
- Excessive alcohol use has also been linked to short and long term memory problems, loss of balance, peripheral neuropathy (nerve problems causing numbness and pain) and dementia.

The Stomach

- Overconsumption of alcohol is dangerous to the stomach lining, and may result in inflammation or severe ulcers.
- Long-term abuse is associated with cancer of the esophagus.

The Reproductive System

- Alcohol use has been related to inability to have an erection and decrease in sperm count.
- Some studies suggest that breast and prostate cancer may be associated with chronic alcohol use.
- Women who drink excessively while pregnant have a risk of bearing a child with a congenital problem called "fetal alcohol syndrome."

