



AlcoEdu

a newsletter for teachers

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Girls! Girls! Girls!

We've devoted this entire issue of AlcoEdu to girls and alcohol. New Mexico girls are now drinking as much as boys according to the 2005 New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey, which polled 5,679 students in grades nine through twelve.

During the 30 days prior to the survey, 71.5% of students reported having had a drink of alcohol and 42.3% indicated that they were current drinkers. The prevalence of current drinking among girls (41.9%) was comparable to that of boys (42.4%). Current drinking increased as grade level increased (9th - 34.9%; 10th - 39.6%; 11th - 48.9%; 12th - 50.7%). New Mexico girls and boys also had similar binge drinking rates (27.2% and 29.5%, respectively) and binge drinking increased as grade level increased (9th - 22.0%; 10th - 25.9%; 11th - 33.4%; 12th - 37.2%).

This is a trend that must stop. Our young women are putting themselves at risk for assault, sexually transmitted disease, unwanted pregnancy, learning and behavioral problems caused by alcohol damage to their developing brains, susceptibility for lifelong alcohol dependence and death due to motor vehicle crashes and alcohol poisoning. They are also drinking and destroying their babies' futures through the devastating effects of fetal alcohol syndrome.

We can't let this happen to our girls. We need to educate them to the risks of underage drinking, consistently enforce zero tolerance alcohol policies and provide help for those who do drink. Their futures depend on it and so do ours.

When You Drink, Your Baby Drinks.



SEE BABY DRINK.

No amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy!

No beer. No wine. No mixed drinks.

Prevent Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

Contact: www.extoicd.org

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is an irreversible condition that is 100% preventable. FAS, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and Alcohol Related Birth Defects (ARBD) result from drinking alcohol during pregnancy. Alcohol produces the most serious neurobehavioral effects on a fetus of all substance abuse, including cocaine, heroin and marijuana, according to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse. FAS diagnosed children are affected by a range of physical, behavioral, and cognitive disabilities that are caused by alcohol crossing through the placenta to the baby.

The FAS Community Resource Center (<http://www.fasstar.com/fas/>) reports that although there are physiological characteristics that affect a baby's appearance (low birth weight, small head and eye

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openings, smooth/wide philtrum—the vertical groove in the upper lip, and thin upper lip), the most serious characteristics of FAS are invisible. They are the symptoms of neurological damage that result from prenatal exposure to alcohol: attention deficits, memory deficits, difficulty with abstract concepts (math, time, money), poor problem solving skills, difficulty learning from consequences, poor judgment, immature behavior, and poor impulse control. *Note: These symptoms are not “behavior problems” but are a result of permanent, unchanging damage to the brain (static encephalopathy) and are not within the child’s control.*

Adults with FASD have difficulty maintaining successful independence. They have trouble staying in school, keeping jobs, or sustaining healthy relationships. Without appropriate support services, these individuals have a high risk of developing secondary disabilities such as mental illness, getting into trouble with the law, abusing alcohol and other drugs, and unwanted pregnancies. Children and adults with FAS are also quite vulnerable to physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

In New Mexico, most mothers of children with FAS have their first child as a teen mother. Almost one infant out of a hundred has some alcohol-related health problems, and an estimated one in 1,000 children under 20 in New Mexico has FAS, 80% of those with this incurable condition end up in the foster care system.

FAS does not just occur in children of mothers who abuse alcohol or are heavy drinkers. The latest research shows that as little as two drinks in early pregnancy or four drinks during a binge episode can kill developing brain cells (source: NOFAS.org) and the baby may suffer irreversible damage. There is no safe amount of alcohol to consume during pregnancy and the US Surgeon General has recommended that women who are pregnant or are planning to become pregnant refrain from consuming any alcohol.

Materials on fetal alcohol syndrome for educators are available from EXTOL (<http://www.extolcf.org>), based in New Mexico. Posters and the movie Gary and the Angels, about an adult, Gary, with FAS, filmed in the Gallup area, are available by contacting Margo Manaraze Wagner at phone: (505)242-6799, fax: (505)242-0790, cell: (505)350-3855 or email: margo@extolcf.org.

New Mexico has a statewide prevention program, funded by the Health and Disability Program, Department of Health, which includes peer education, information and materials and is housed at the University of New Mexico CASAA office (505) 925-2302 or (800) 552-8195. See: <http://casaa.unm.edu/PreventFAS/>.

One more resource for educators is the National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, <http://www.nofas.org/educator/>. For a list of specific resources in New Mexico, including prevention, diagnostics and counseling see: <http://www.nofas.org/resource> and click on New Mexico.

Why Do Girls Drink?

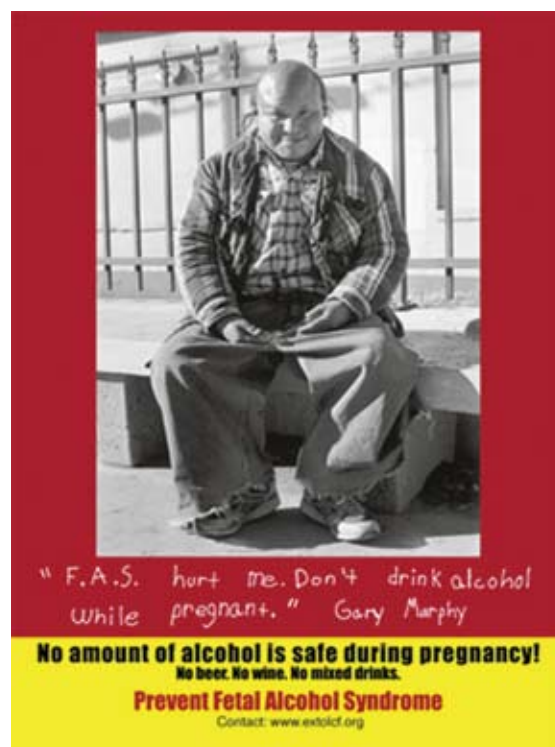
The average age when girls first try alcohol is 13. More than 40% of children who start drinking before the age of 15 will abuse alcohol or develop alcohol dependence later in life.

The national *Monitoring the Future* survey indicates that the most common reason teens give for drinking is to have fun or relax. Those who drink to deal with problems, anger or frustration, however, are the drinkers who exhibit the most problematic drinking behaviors. Those who list multiple reasons to drink, including coping with life, are the heaviest drinkers. Girls who drank before 4 p.m. were six times more likely to drink for multiple reasons.

Girls, Alcohol and Violence

Impaired judgment and reduced coordination from intoxication may lead to physical harm resulting from falls or physical altercations. Studies suggest that girls who drink are more likely to be victims of self- and peer-inflicted violence.

Among eighth grade girls who drink heavily, 37 percent report attempting suicide, three times the 11 percent attempted suicide rate of girls who do not drink. Nationally, almost 12 percent of adolescent drinkers (1.2 million 7th – 12th graders) engage in alcohol-related physical fighting.



Girls, Alcohol and Sex

Teenage girls who are heavy drinkers are five times more likely than non-drinking girls to engage in sexual intercourse and a third less likely to use condoms, which can result in pregnancy, and contracting a sexually transmitted disease such as HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, and Chlamydia. The study *Youth and Alcohol: Dangerous and Deadly Consequences* reports that among male high school students, 39 percent say it is acceptable for a boy to force sex with a girl who is drunk or high and that alcohol use is implicated in one- to two-thirds of sexual assault and “date rape” cases among teens and college students.

In 2005, 46.5% of New Mexico teens in grades 9-12 reported that they have had sex. Alcohol or drug use before sexual intercourse was reported by 26.3% of students. The rates of sexually transmitted diseases among New Mexico’s teens are among the highest in the nation. Our rate of teen pregnancy is also high: 54.8 per 1000 girls age 15-17, compared to the US Department of Health and Human Services Healthy People 2010 goal of 45 per 1000.

Girls, Alcohol and Energy Drinks

A 2007 Wake Forest University School of Medicine study found that students who drink alcohol mixed with energy drinks are twice as likely to be hurt or injured, to ride with a drunk driver, to commit sexual assault and nearly twice as likely to be sexually assaulted than students who drink other alcoholic drinks.

Researchers say that although the symptoms of drunkenness were reduced among students who mixed energy drinks with alcohol, they were still drunk, just less able to tell when they were drunk or if someone else was, too.

As energy drinks manufacturers noticed the trend in bars of mixing Red Bull with a variety of hard liquors, they began to add alcohol to energy drinks that are often sold by unsuspecting convenience and grocery store clerks. Since the drink cans are similar to that of the original energy drinks, some clerks mistakenly sell the alcoholic energy drinks to underage teens. The packaging for one energy drink, called “Rockstar,” is very similar to the packaging for the alcoholic version, called “Rockstar 21.”



Girls, Depression, and Alcohol

Teenage girls experience depression 50% more than teenage boys, regardless of alcohol consumption. Twelve to sixteen year old girls who are current drinkers are four times more likely than their non-drinking peers to suffer depression. Moreover, adolescent girls who are heavy drinkers are more likely than boys to say they drink to escape problems or because of frustration and anger. Severe cases of depression can lead to suicide.

According to the 2005 New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey, girls (36.2%) were more likely to report feeling sad and hopeless than boys (21.0%). In the 12 months before the survey, 18.5% had seriously considered suicide and 15.8% had made a suicide plan within the previous 12 months. Girls were more likely than boys to consider suicide (22.4% and 14.6%) and to have made a suicide plan (18.7% and 12.8%).

Girls and Alcohol Poisoning

Binge drinking can be extremely dangerous for young girls because of their inexperience with alcohol and small body mass. They also may not eat properly or have a low daily caloric intake, placing them at a higher risk for acute alcohol intoxication which can cause permanent injury and death.

Long Term Effects of Drinking

Girls who binge drink in high school are more likely to be overweight and have high blood pressure when they reach their 20s. They are also more likely to develop alcoholism. Studies show excessive alcohol use causes brain shrinkage and alcoholism (the second leading cause of dementia).

A new Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation study indicates that people who drink heavily in their youth have a higher risk of developing the risk factors for heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Girls and Alcohol Web Resources

This Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Prevention Project site has data, prevention materials and posters:

<http://casaa.unm.edu/PreventFAS/index.htm>

Based in NM, EXTOL provides posters (see cover & p.2), bumperstickers, information and a film made in the Gallup area, *Gary and the Angels*, on fetal alcohol syndrome:

<http://www.extolcf.org>

UNM IPL offers a variety of materials on youth and alcohol including Fast Facts on Underage Drinking:

<http://ipl.unm.edu/traf/uad-sources.html>

Two sites for Federal resources on underage drinking are:

<http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/>

<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/underagedrinking/programs.html>

The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth monitors the alcohol industry's marketing practices to youth.

<http://camy.org/>

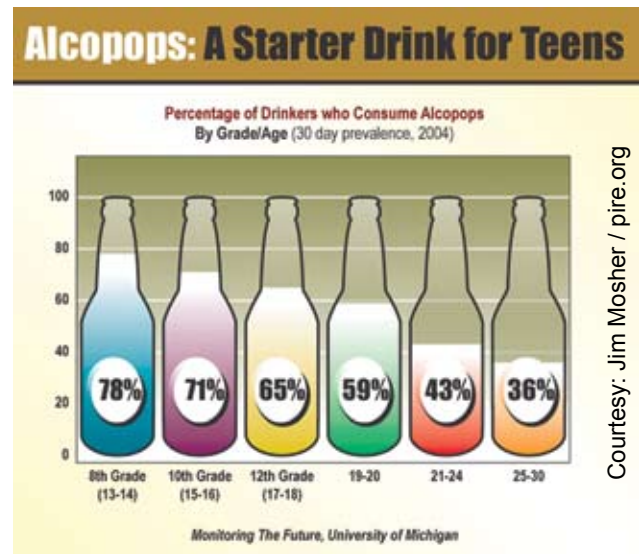
This website for girls, sponsored by the National Woman's Health Information Center, features a chart showing how alcohol affects their bodies, explains terminology, and makes the point that not everyone drinks:

<http://www.girlshealth.gov/substance/alcohol.htm>

This the link for the US Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health fact sheet on underage drinking and violence:

<http://www.alcoholfreechildren.org/gs/stats/Fct%20Sht-Violence.pdf>

Girls' Exposure to Alcohol Advertising



In 2005, the American Medical Association released the results of two nationwide polls that reveal the extent of underage consumption and marketing of the sweet flavored malt beverages know as alcopops. According to the findings, approximately one-third of teen girls reported having tried alcopops, more teen girls than teen boys have had alcopops in the past 6 months, and teen girls reported drinking alcopops more than other alcoholic drink. In contrast, adult women (age 21 or older) ranked alcopops as their least consumed alcoholic beverage. More teen girls than women 21 or older also reported seeing or hearing more alcopop advertisements on television, radio, billboards, the internet, and in magazines.

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