

HSE Press Release: Monday, 11th June 2018

HSE experts available for interview on request



www.AskAboutAlcohol.ie

As the end is in sight for Exam Students, the HSE encourages parents to have important conversations about celebrating safely

- *Children who talk with their parents about alcohol and drugs are up to 50% less likely to use them*

The HSE is encouraging parents to **talk to their teenagers about alcohol** ahead of their Leaving and Junior Certificate end-of-exam celebrations. [AskAboutAlcohol.ie](http://www.AskAboutAlcohol.ie) offers parents information and advice to help keep children and young people safe from alcohol-related harm. The Leaving and Junior Certificate exams will finish mid-late June, with exam results coming out in August and September. While young people deserve to celebrate their hard work after their exams, **it is important for parents to have open conversations about the risks that come with drinking alcohol, before the celebrations begin.**

Short term risks related to alcohol include accidents and injuries, alcohol poisoning and risky sexual behaviour. Longer term, the risks associated with alcohol intake include poor mental health, learning difficulties and memory problems and alcohol dependence. There is also a heightened risk when alcohol is mixed with other drugs, as the effects can be unpredictable and dangerous.

When it comes to setting boundaries for your teenager around alcohol, **Dr Bobby Smyth, Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist, has this practical advice for parents:**

“If your child is over 18, talk to them about how they are going to celebrate. Come to an agreement between you that includes things like –if they are going to drink, how many drinks they will have?; advise them to drink soft drinks in between alcoholic drinks and not to get into rounds with friends. You should also talk to them about who they will be with and how they will get home. Agree a time for them to be home and talk to the parents of their friends - it will work best if you all take the same approach. Also, it is so important to let your child know that they can always call you, no matter what. They need to feel they can safely call you if they, or a friend, gets into trouble. If your child is under 18, whatever the celebration, make it an alcohol free one.”

Children and teens *need* our protection when it comes to alcohol and substance use. **Dr Bobby Smyth** explains how parents are the most important influence in influencing children’s attitudes: *“Research shows that the earlier young people start to drink alcohol, the greater the long term risks. My advice for parents is to be informed about the risks associated with alcohol, and to chat to teenagers openly about them. Reassuringly for parents, research has shown that children who have conversations with their parents and learn a lot about the dangers of alcohol and drug use are up to 50% less likely to use alcohol and drugs than those who don’t have such conversations”^[1].*

Some helpful advice on AskAboutAlcohol.ie for parents of teenagers includes:

- [Tips for talking to a teen](#) - how to approach the conversation and what to say
- [Alcohol and young people](#) – what you and your child should know
- [Top 10 Tips for Parents](#) – a great starting point for parents
- [Guide for dealing with parties and discos](#)

If you think your child is drinking, AskAboutAlcohol.ie provides advice and information to parents and a guide for setting rules around alcohol. Parents can also contact the HSE Alcohol Helpline on 1800 459 459 if you have a question or worry in relation to your child and alcohol.

ENDS

*****HSE experts are available for interview on this topic**

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^[1] Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent’s Guide to Prevention, Drug Enforcement Administration and U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., 2012.