

# Refuse, Remove, Reasons: Alcohol Related Deaths

## On the Video...

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism reports that more young people today are dying from alcohol-related accidents. Among 18 to 24 year olds, the number of deaths has risen by over 20 percent in the last ten years.

"I woke up in the driver's side seat, blood all over me, glass everywhere. The doctors said my friend had 48 hours to live," says Nick, whose identity we've agreed to protect. This was the third time he wrecked a car while drunk. His friend survived the accident.

The latest surveys report that 45 percent of kids report binge drinking and 29 percent admit to drinking and driving. The result? The number of 18 to 24 year olds dying from alcohol-related accidents is on the rise. And that's not all, says Jim Mosher, director of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.

"It's the number one contributor to youth deaths, injuries, including violence, suicide, car crashes, and other forms of serious harm. In addition it undermines school work, it undermines family relationships. It is a main contributor to sexual assaults among young people, which is on the rise across the country."

Like many kids, Nick had his first drink from his parent's liquor cabinet. He was 12. "I loved it, I was off to the races then. It made me feel ten feet tall and bulletproof," he says.

"The parents aren't aware that their kids are even interested in drinking," says Ari Russell, executive director of GUIDE, a community-based substance abuse prevention agency.

"They just think that they are too young to start thinking about alcohol. And so they are not checking their supplies, they are not seeing is the whiskey going down in the bottle. Is there a beer missing from the refrigerator? Is there a wine cooler missing from the refrigerator? They are not even paying attention to it."

Experts say parents need to insist that their kids don't drink, even if that causes a big argument and makes you unpopular. "But isn't that part of being a parent?" says Dr. Robert Margolis, an alcohol and drug counselor. "Aren't there certain things worth fighting? Aren't there certain lines worth drawing, where you say, 'Okay. You know, I'm not going to worry so much about how long his hair is. I may not worry about the CDs that he listens to. But when it comes to drinking, then I'm going to fight that battle.'"

After one too many close calls, Nick is now sober. "It's just a hundred times, a thousand times better."

## What We Need to Know...

Research defines binge drinking as having five or more drinks in a row. Reasons adolescents give for binge drinking include: to get drunk, the status associated with drinking, the culture of drinking on campus, peer pressure and academic stress.

Binge drinkers are 21 times more likely to: miss class, fall behind in schoolwork, damage property, injure themselves, engage in unplanned and/or unprotected sex, get in trouble with the police, and drink and drive.

## Conversation Starters...

- Do statistics about alcohol related deaths surprise you?
- People often think, "it will never happen to me." Do you know what would happen to your family if something happened to you?
- Sometimes teens select a "designated driver." Would you ever designate someone else to assure your well-being? Would you designate someone to select a prom date? To select a college to attend?