

Refuse, Remove, Reasons: Teen Alcohol Quiz

On the Video...

Millions of underage kids drink. And some of those millions will become addicted. And a study suggests that teens are heavily influenced by the drinking habits of their friends.

"I mean I drink to have fun," says 18-year-old Stan.

"I've come to terms with my alcoholism," says 18-year-old Jennifer.

How many parents actually know when, how and why their kids are drinking? Do parents really know the signs of alcoholism among their teens? A diagnostic questionnaire designed by researchers from Harvard University may help.

It's call the CRAFFT Test and there are these six questions:

C - Have you ever ridden in a **CAR** driven by someone (including yourself) who was "high" or had been using alcohol or drugs?

R - Do you ever use alcohol or drugs to **RELAX**, feel better about yourself, or fit in?

A - Do you ever use alcohol/drugs while you are by yourself, **ALONE**?

F - Do you ever **FORGET** things you did while using alcohol or drugs?

F - Do your family or **FRIENDS** ever tell you that you should cut down on your drinking or drug use?

T - Have you gotten into **TROUBLE** while you were using alcohol or drugs?

The test was designed by pediatricians to use during regular office visits. Its authors say that teens who answer yes to two or more of these questions are either alcoholics, drug addicts... or at the risk of becoming one.

"I think doctors are in an ideal position to do it, but my experience with physicians is they don't have time," says Dr. David Karol Gore, an addiction therapist.

Parents can ask doctors to take the time... but they should also discuss drugs and alcohol directly with their children.

"They may not get the answers that are truthful, but by asking the questions they'll hopefully be opening up the possibility the children and teenagers will want to talk to them at a later date," says Dr. Gore. And at that later date, he says parents should ask the questions again... and teach their children to ask themselves.

"I could give you some of my friends who could probably answer 'Yes' to all of these questions," says Stan.

What We Need to Know...

After a decade of consistent declines in teen drug abuse, a recent national study released by The Partnership At Drugfree.org and the MetLife Foundation points to a marked upswings in use of drugs that teens are likely to encounter at parties and in other social situations. According to the 2009 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS), the number of teens in grades 9-12 that used alcohol in the past month has grown by 11 percent (from 35 percent in 2008 to 39 percent in 2009).

Underage drinking occurs when anyone under age 21 drinks alcohol in any amount or form. Underage drinking is dangerous and it's against the law, except in special cases when it is part of a religious ceremony.

Beer and wine is NOT safer than hard liquor. Alcohol is alcohol – and it can cause problems no matter how it is consumed. One 12-ounce bottle of beer or a 5-ounce glass of wine (about a half cup) has as much alcohol as a 1.5-ounce shot of liquor.

Conversation Starters...

- How would you answer the questions to the CRAFFT test?
- How do you think your friends would answer the questions?
- If anyone could answer yes to two or more of the questions, what might you do to help them?