

# Alcohol

## ■ Pressured to drink

Advertising, magazines and television make **alcoholic drinks seem attractive and fun**. It is also easy for a teenager to be forced to drink because of peer pressure.

Teens may also drink because they are curious, they believe that it will make them feel good and reduce stress, and because they want to feel older.

## ■ Binge drinking

Binge drinking is the consumption of **four or more drinks in a row**. This excessive drinking can lead to difficulty in concentrating, memory **lapses**, **mood** changes, and other problems that affect everyday life. However, binge drinking carries more serious and **longer-lasting** risks as well.

## ■ Alcohol poisoning

Alcohol poisoning is **the most life-threatening consequence** of binge drinking. It affects the body's involuntary reflexes – including breathing and the **gag reflex**. If the gag reflex is not working properly, a person can **choke to death** on his or her vomit.

Other signs of alcohol poisoning include:

- extreme confusion
- inability to be awakened
- vomiting
- **seizures**



- slow or irregular breathing
- low body temperature
- bluish or pale skin.

## ■ What to do

If you have a friend whose drinking worries you, make sure he or she stays safe. Don't let your friend drink and drive, for example. If you can, try to **keep** friends who have been drinking **from** doing anything dangerous. Protect yourself, too. Do not get in a car with someone who has been drinking, call a taxi instead.

Everyone can decide **whether** to drink and how much. It is possible to enjoy a party or another event just as much, if not more, without drinking.

Having alcoholic drinks as a habit is usually just a step away from addiction (when you depend on drinking to feel good or **get through** your day). It is usually hard for teens to recognise they have a problem, which is why **friends or family can help**.



**bluish:** *bluastro*  
**to choke to death:** *morire soffocato*  
**gag reflex:** *riflesso faringeo*  
**to get through:** *affrontare*  
**in a row:** *di seguito*  
**to keep (someone) from (doing something):** *evitare (che qualcuno faccia qualcosa)*  
**lapse:** *vuoto*  
**longer-lasting:** *di maggior durata*  
**mood:** *umore*  
**seizure:** *convulsione*  
**whether:** *se*

## 1 Answer the questions.

1. What can sometimes make drinking look attractive?
2. Why may teens start drinking alcohol?
3. What is binge drinking?
4. How can drinking alcohol affect everyday life?
5. What involuntary reflex can be lethal if inhibited by drinking?
6. What are other negative effects of alcohol poisoning?
7. What is the best thing to do when one of your friends drinks too much?
8. When is drinking alcohol considered an addiction?



## 2 The following are informal terms associated with alcoholic drinks and drinking. Guess their meaning by matching the items on the left to their meaning on the right.

- |                |                          |                                                             |
|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Booze       | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Champagne                                                |
| 2. Shot        | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Six cans of beer                                         |
| 3. Hangover    | <input type="checkbox"/> | c. An alcoholic drink before going to bed                   |
| 4. A sixer     | <input type="checkbox"/> | d. A beer                                                   |
| 5. A cold one  | <input type="checkbox"/> | e. Strong alcohol                                           |
| 6. Bubbly      | <input type="checkbox"/> | f. A small measure of undiluted liquor                      |
| 7. A night cap | <input type="checkbox"/> | g. The bad feeling you have the day after drinking too much |
| 8. Firewater   | <input type="checkbox"/> | h. Alcoholic drink                                          |



### THE GAG REFLEX

The gag reflex, also known as the pharyngeal reflex or laryngeal spasm, is a contraction of the back of the throat activated by an object touching the roof of your mouth, the back of your tongue, the area around your tonsils, or the back of your throat. The reflex helps prevent choking, as well as helping to moderate the transition from liquid to solid foods during infancy.



## 3 **GROUP WORK** Discuss the questions.

1. What is, in your opinion, the boundary between drinking for fun and becoming an alcohol addict?
2. How much and when do you drink? What do you think is the limit?
3. What do you drink?
4. What do you feel or what happens when you drink?
5. Do you drink alone or with friends?
6. What would you say to a friend who has a problem with alcohol?