



# TEENAGERS AND ALCOHOL

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS



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# ALCOHOL IN SWEDEN

Nearly all parents in Sweden agree that it is wrong for their children to drink alcohol. Despite this, teenagers sometimes drink alcohol and get drunk. This brochure is for guardians of teenagers. It gives you information about alcohol in Sweden and ideas for how you can talk about alcohol with your teenager.



## TEENAGERS AND ALCOHOL

All teenagers are different. Some have tried alcohol and some have not. It is important to talk about alcohol, even if your child has not tried it. It is easier for you to be a parent and show your child you care if you talk about alcohol openly.

### HOW DOES ALCOHOL AFFECT THE BODY?

Alcohol is a toxin that affects the body. It is not good for anyone to drink a lot of alcohol. Drinking a lot is extra dangerous for young people. The human brain keeps developing until we reach 25 years of age. This means that young people's brains are more easily damaged by alcohol. People who start drinking alcohol at a young age are also at greater risk of becoming addicted to it. To encourage us to drink less alcohol in Sweden, only Systembolaget shops are permitted to sell strong beer, wine and spirits.\*

In Sweden, all people younger than 18 years old are classed as children. There are laws about alcohol to protect children and young people.

### SOME OF THE LAWS SAY THAT:

- You must be at least 18 years old to drink alcohol in a restaurant or bar
- You must be at least 20 years old to buy alcohol from Systembolaget
- It is against the law for adults to buy or give alcohol to someone who is younger than 20 years old

### DID YOU KNOW THAT...

Teenagers in Sweden drink less alcohol today than they did 10 years ago. Surveys on how much Swedish teenagers drink have been carried out since 1977. Today the amount of alcohol that teenage boys and girls drink is at the lowest level since the surveys started, and more than half of teenagers do not drink alcohol at all.

\* Systembolaget is a chain of shops owned by the Swedish state, which thinks that public health is more important than earning a lot of money. That is why Systembolaget never has special offers or discounts that increase sales. Read more on the website: [systembolaget.se](http://systembolaget.se)

# BEING THE PARENT OF A TEENAGER

Many people find that their teenage years are a time where a lot of things change, and teenagers often want to be more like an adult than like a child. It can be fun and exciting, but also a bit difficult. Their bodies change and they experience many new feelings. It is also common for teenagers to make new friends. Parents of teenagers also have many new things to deal with, and it is easy to feel alone with all your questions. By talking to other adults, many find out that most people have the same thoughts.



## HOW DO YOU TALK ABOUT ALCOHOL?

Close relationships are often built by talking openly with each other. Children need to feel that they can be honest without their parents getting angry. If you are worried that your child might drink alcohol or that he or she has friends who do, it is best to ask. Try to talk in a calm way, no matter what your child says. It is important that your teenager understands that you love him or her no matter what happens.



## A SUMMARY OF ADVICE FOR PARENTS

### **SHOW THEM THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED AND LISTEN**

A good relationship is about building up trust. Show that you are interested in your child's thoughts and listen without judging them.

### **TELL THEM WHY YOU ARE WORRIED**

Forbidding things is not a good method. For your child to listen to you, it is important that he or she understands your reasons. Explain why you are worried and what it feels like to be a parent.

### **TRUST YOURSELF**

Trust your values and what you think is right or wrong. As a parent you have the right to set limits for your child.

### **BE CLEAR**

Talk to your child about what the rules are. If you are clear, and if you and your teenager agree with each other, it will be easier for your teenager to follow the rules.

### **WAIT BEFORE HAVING A DISCUSSION**

If your child comes home drunk, you might feel very angry and want to shout or cry, but try to wait before having a discussion. Give your child some water to drink and let him or her sleep before you discuss things together. As a parent you have the right to be angry, but you never have the right to use violence.

### **GET HELP FROM OTHER PARENTS**

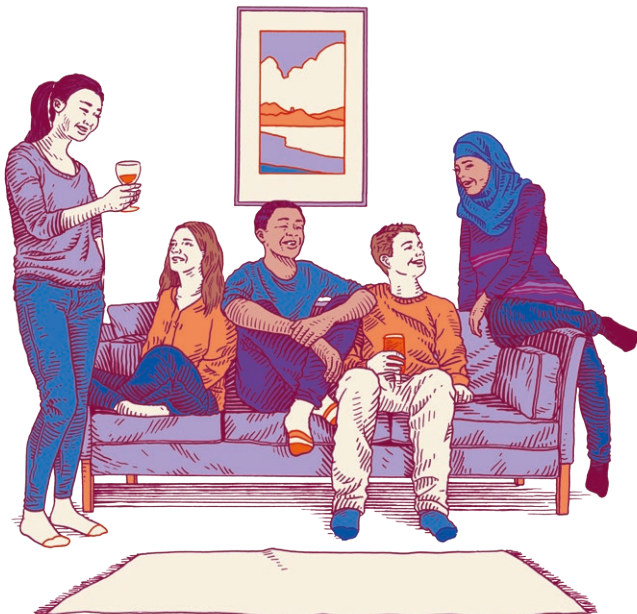
Sometimes it can be good to talk to other parents to find out how they do things. Teenagers sometimes think that their friends can do whatever they want and can stay out as late as they want. Usually the truth is that many parents set similar rules.

## NEW FRIENDS

It is natural for teenagers to make new friends. As a parent you might feel less important and like an outsider when your child suddenly starts spending a lot of time with his or her new friends. But remember that you as a parent are always important to your child. Try to show interest and be happy about all the new friends that your son or daughter has made. If you are worried, you can ask for the phone numbers of the friends or their parents. Explain why you want the numbers. Tell your child that you trust him or her, but that it is a good idea to have the phone numbers in case anything happens.

## DARE TO LET GO

Your child is growing up. Be open to change and dare to let go. But show that you are there and want to help.



# HELPFUL CONTACTS

Sometimes it can be reassuring to talk to someone who knows a bit more about teenagers and alcohol. Here are a few of the organisations that you can contact.

## **SOCIAL SERVICES (SOCIALTJÄNSTEN)**

This is where you can talk to social workers who are experienced in talking to young people and adults about all sorts of subjects. You can find contact details on the website of your municipality (your "kommun").

## **BRIS ADULT HELPLINE (BRIS VUXENTELEFON): 0771-50 50 50**

BRIS welcomes phone calls from adults who need advice and someone to talk to about children.

## **PARENT HELPLINE (FÖRÄLDRATELEFONEN): 020-85 20 00**

Social workers and psychologists answer your phone calls to this helpline to support and help you in your role as a parent.

## **HEALTH SERVICE AT SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN (ELEVHÄLSAN)**

Throughout children's school life, there are counsellors, "kuratorer", and nurses, "sköterskor", who you can contact for advice and support.

## **USEFUL WEBSITES**

### **INFORMATIONSVÄRIGE.SE**

Here you can read about how Swedish society works.

### **TONÅRSPARLÖREN.SE**

A website with advice and facts about teenagers and alcohol.

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This brochure is published by the organisation IQ. Our vision is a society where alcoholic drinks are enjoyed sensibly so that no one gets hurt.

