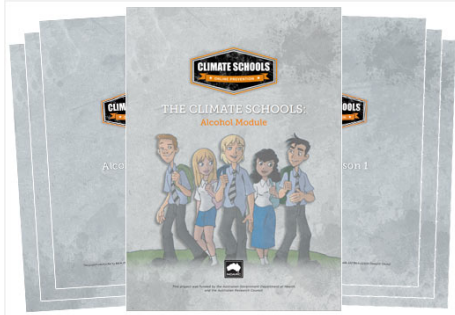





Age and the Australian Alcohol Guidelines: Class Activity



Evidence ratings: 

This resource has undergone expert review. See our [Help/Q&A section](#) for more details.

Year: Year 7–8

Targeted Drugs: Alcohol

Tags: standard drinks, underage drinking, Climate Schools

Time Allocated: 1 lesson

Links to National Curriculum:

ACPPS073 (Yr 7–8), ACPPS076 (Yr 7–8), ACPPS077 (Yr 7–8)

Origin: Australian

Cost:

Free

Attachments

 [Worksheet: Australian Alcohol Guidelines](#)

Developers

Climate Schools was developed by researchers formerly based at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC), School of Psychiatry, and the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use at UNSW Sydney, and currently based at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of Sydney, Australia. See [Climate Schools](#).

Format

Two options:

- Class discussion alone
- Worksheet followed by class discussion.

Preparation

- Photocopy or print class worksheet “Australian Alcohol Guidelines” (optional).

Activity

Discussion topic:

The Australian Alcohol Guidelines recommend that younger people (between the ages of 15 and 17 years):

- Should delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible;
- Should not drink above the levels set for adults;
- Should drink in a safe environment, supervised by adults.

What do the class think are the reasons for these recommendations?

Optional: The class worksheet (attached) can be completed by students prior to class discussion.

Background Information

Possible points for discussion:

- **Reduced Body Mass.** When alcohol is absorbed, it is distributed throughout the body’s total water content. On average, younger people have a smaller body mass than adults and correspondingly have less water. This means that in a younger person there is less water to dilute the alcohol, so the alcohol is more concentrated and will have a greater effect on the person. A good analogy to explain this concept is to think of diluting cordial with water. If you add cordial to a large glass of water, the cordial will be weak. If you add cordial to a small glass of water, the cordial will be strong. Likewise, for adolescents, where there is less water available to dilute the alcohol, the overall strength of the alcohol is greater.
- **Lack of experience.** Younger people also lack experience of drinking and its effects. In some societies young people are gradually introduced to alcohol within the family context and learn about their own reaction to alcohol in a safe and supportive context. In our culture that is not always the case. This means that the first time some young people consume alcohol is out with friends in a high-risk situation and they do not have any knowledge or yardstick to know what are safe and unsafe amounts of alcohol to consume.
- **Risk of problems later in life.** There is evidence from the United States that the younger a person starts to drink, the greater the risk of developing alcohol related problems later in life. Adolescents who drank by 14 years were more likely to experience alcohol dependence than those who did not drink until they were 21 years old. Studies also indicate that the later adolescents delay their first drink, the less likely they will become regular consumers.
- **The teenage brain is still developing.** The human brain is undergoing important development and maturation well into the 20s. Research findings suggest that drinking alcohol during these teenage years can disrupt healthy brain development.

Benefits

- Understanding of the reasons for the different guidelines for younger age groups.

Evidence Base

Secondary teachers reviewed this and other Climate School activities, with 92.3% rating these activities as good or very good. This particular activity was among the most popular activities selected for implementation by teachers.

The benefits of implementing individual activities from the Climate schools has not been examined. The benefits of implementing the entire 6 session Climate schools program has been supported by multiple research studies, see [Climate Schools: Alcohol Module](#).

Page last reviewed: 8 May 2019.