



alcohol
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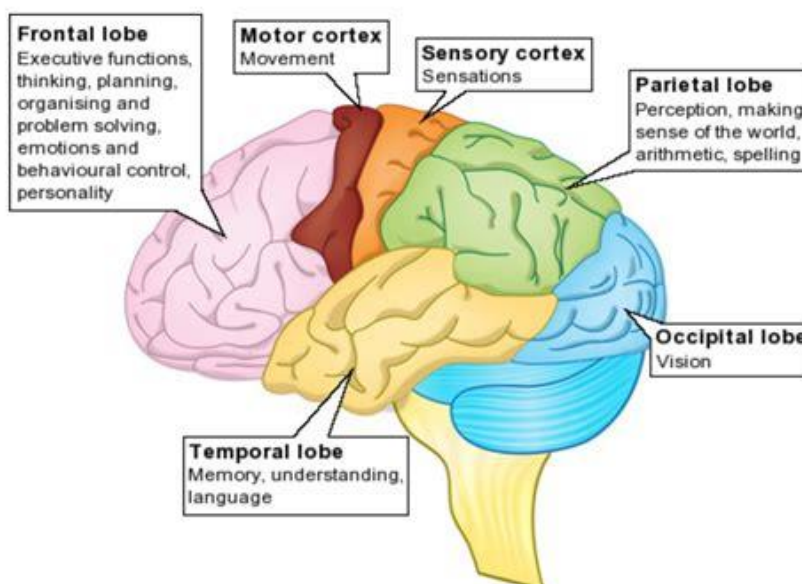


Alcohol & Teen Brain FACTSHEET

This factsheet will provide you with information on how alcohol can affect the developing teen brain and helpful links to websites for more information.

Did you know?

Drinking in adolescence can be harmful to young people's physical development, particularly brain development. Adolescence is a critical period in a young person's development towards adulthood. What they learn during their teenage years, and how they learn it, can set the young person's path for later life. Drinking alcohol during the teenage years can cause permanent brain damage resulting in memory problems, inability to learn, problems with verbal skills, alcohol dependence and depression and other problems in later life.



During adolescence the brain undergoes a lot of changes. During these changes the brain is more sensitive to alcohol (sections affected are highlighted in boxes). Areas of the brain that may be most affected by alcohol are the temporal lobe, pre frontal and frontal cortex; this means memory, learning, emotions and language skills could be damaged by heavy alcohol consumption.

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Different parts of the brain develop at different rates as we grow and depending on whether we are male or female. For example the pre-frontal cortex, which houses the part of the brain that controls rational thinking does not begin to mature until around the age of 19 and only fully matures by around age 21 for women and 28 for men. Damage to the pre-frontal cortex during its development can have life-long consequences for the young person's memory, personality and behaviour.

Alcohol can affect a teenager's social development if they start drinking at an early age; for example they may spend their time drinking instead of participating in sports or other recreational activities with peers/friends. They may use alcohol as a coping strategy for any worries, difficulties or problems which may lead to misuse of other substances. If early or excessive alcohol use leads to memory problems, learning difficulties and poor verbal skills this may potentially impact on a young person's ability to attend school, achieve academically and affect confidence with their peers. This will increase the likelihood of mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, more self-harming behaviour's and suicidal thoughts.

KEY FACTS

- The changes that occur to the brain during the teenage years make young people more vulnerable to drug dependence.
- People who first use alcohol before the age of 15 years are five times more likely to abuse alcohol than those who first use it aged 21 years and over.
- This increased use leads to a greater chance of alcohol related problems in later life, including alcohol addiction.
- Recent research suggests that young people under the age of 18 should avoid alcohol for health reasons.
- Research shows that a hangover can be just as damaging to the brain as the heavy drinking itself; dehydration impairs memory function and concentration so learning any new information and trying to recall memories would be impaired by a hangover.

VISIT THESE USEFUL WEBSITES

www.nspcc.org.uk

Wide range of downloadable publications on keeping safe

www.youngminds.org.uk

Information for parents and young people on all aspects of mental health and emotional wellbeing

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/talkingtochildren.aspx>

NHS advice and information about talking to your child about feelings

www.drinkaware.co.uk/advice/underage-drinking/teenage-drinking/

Information about teenage drinking

www.alcoholeducationtrust.org/

Information on how to talk to teenagers about drinking