



## April: Alcohol Awareness Month

by Bill Breitsprecher

Some may ask, “**WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT ALCOHOL**” in this month’s section for and about youth?

April is *Alcohol Awareness Month*. Alcohol abuse affects people of all ages - children, teens, adults, parents, and even grandparents. It is important for families to talk about alcohol abuse and drugs. These are important subjects to discuss with our children.

The use of alcohol is deeply ingrained in our culture. It is not possible to watch a major sporting event without seeing ads for beer. Many publications intended for adults but frequently read by teens contain ads for wine, beer, and hard liquor. Television shows feature alcohol as part of their stories. Alcohol is an accepted drug in our culture. For some, it is a part of holidays and celebrations.

For most, alcohol is no big deal - they can take it or leave it. When they have a drink, they have ONE drink. Most people are not interested in a second drink. If offered one, they politely decline or will sip it slowly, often not finishing it.

Binge drinking is defined as having 5 or more drinks in one sitting - that’s a lot of alcohol. Most people do not binge drink. For some, however, that is the way they drink - it may even seem “normal,” but it is not.

When does alcohol use become abuse? When it creates problems. We don’t want to identify who has a drinking problem. We want to share information so that people can think about drinking and decide for themselves.

When a person has a drinking problem, it can be confusing - they know that alcohol use and abuse creates difficulties, but they do it again and again. Sure, intoxication can lead to negative behavior and adversely affect our lives. But for many problem drinkers, the bigger issue is not what happens when they drink - the real problem is when they are sober and pick up that first drink. When one knows that they drink heavily, get intoxicated, and get in trouble, why would they choose to do it again and again?

For many, the root of drinking problems is the way they look at alcohol when they are **TOTALLY SOBER!** For many problem binge drinkers, it is not the last drink that is the problem, its the first drink. If one knows that they binge drink and that it creates problems, why would they pick up that first drink? If a person is allergic to strawberries, breaks out in hives, and ends up in the hospital when they eat them, do they even think about having “that first berry” again and again?

No - most of us learn to avoid consuming food and beverages that harm us. It usually only takes one bad experience. Learning about alcohol, its affects on the human body, the impact it has on people’s lives, and the difficulties some have in controlling their drinking is an important lesson for people of all ages.

We have created a Web page about ALCOHOL AWARENESS at:

[www.youthalcoholawareness.org](http://www.youthalcoholawareness.org)

# For the Young and Young at Heart Understanding the Effects of Alcohol



You probably have seen people drinking alcohol in real life, on television, in videos, or in the movies. The alcohol might have been beer, wine, or a cocktail. It may have been served in a glass, in a bottle, or in a can. On TV, in movies, in videos, people drinking alcohol may seem to be happy, rich, and famous. Some may seem silly. Some may appear sad, angry, or even violent. In real life, you may have seen people act in these ways when they have been drinking. Or maybe not. The truth is that alcohol affects different people in different ways. But one thing is sure. Alcohol is very dangerous for a young person like you, and it is illegal too.

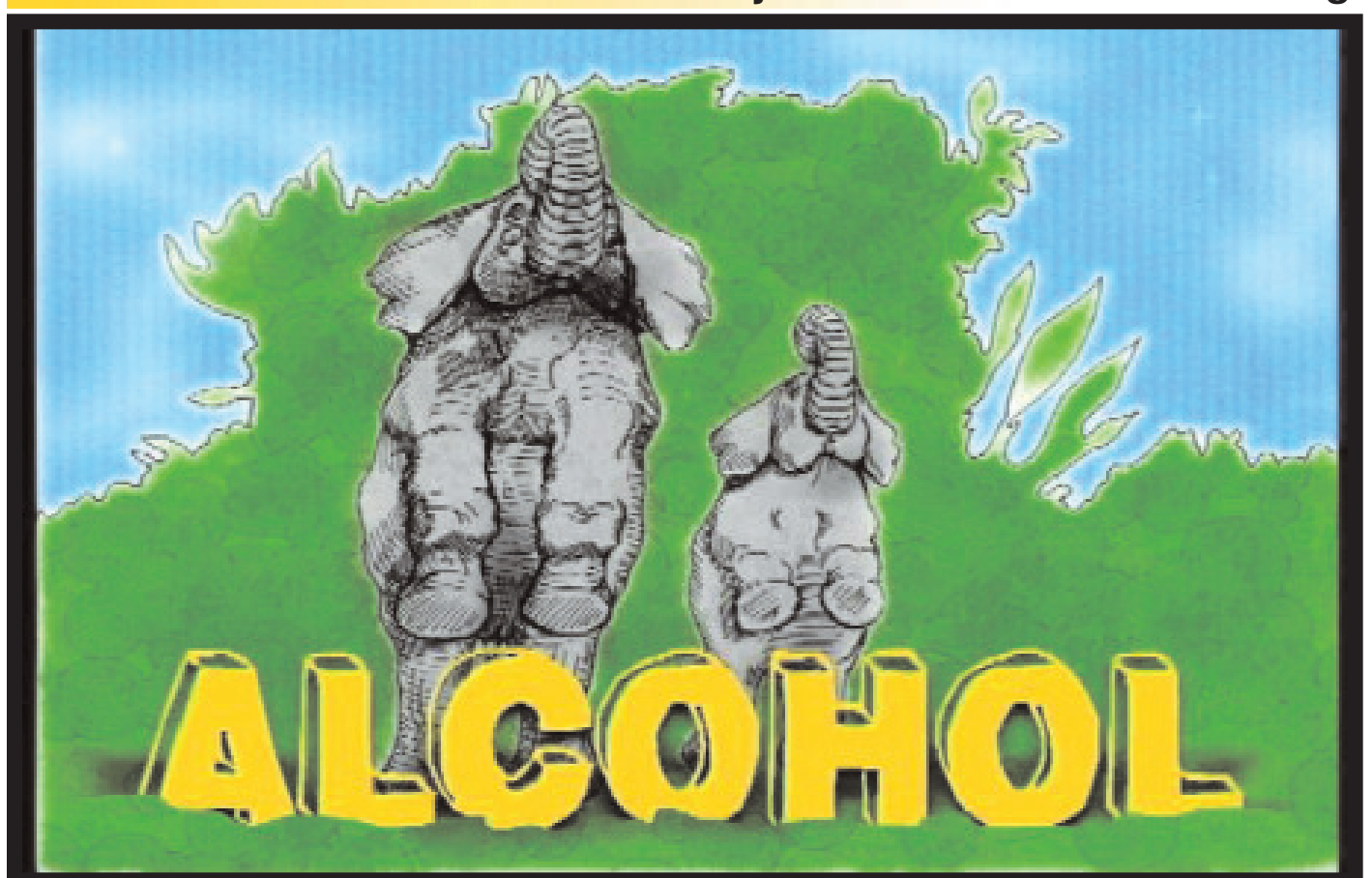
### Learn How Alcohol Affects the Body

- \*With the first sip of alcohol, a drinker is affected.
- \*Alcohol passes through the lining of the stomach into the bloodstream. It irritates the stomach lining, which can make a person feel sick. If drinking continues, the person may vomit.
- \*Alcohol moves through the bloodstream to every organ in the body, including the brain.
- \*Once alcohol enters the brain, it changes the way a person behaves. Alcohol can make people do things they do not want to do.

- \*As a person drinks more alcohol, the ability to make decisions is affected. By drinking more and more alcohol, a person may lose balance and be unable to see or speak clearly. The more a person drinks, the worse the effects can be.
- \*Alcohol can have lasting effects on the brain, impairing how a person learns, thinks, and remembers.
- \*Alcohol can kill. When a person drinks too much alcohol in a very short period, alcohol poisoning can occur. Breathing gets difficult. A person can vomit, pass out, or even die.
- \*Some people become addicted to alcohol. They drink more and more as they get used to the alcohol. But they can stop and recover.

**REMEMBER: Just one drink can have serious effects.** Your age, your weight, your height, and your gender will all affect how you react to alcohol. For young people whose bodies are still developing, the effects of even a little alcohol can be worse than they are for older people.

Please check out our  
**ALCOHOL AWARENESS WEB at:**  
[www.youthalcoholawareness.org](http://www.youthalcoholawareness.org)



See *Big Stomp and Little Stomp*  
Everyday Saturday Morning at  
11 am on My Madison TV14

