

Partying safely - tips for teenagers

Partying is fun for people of all ages. Teenagers in particular like to party. This may include clubbing, attending a concert or festival, having a party at home or going to a party at a friend's house. If you follow a few simple suggestions, it will help you stay safe while you're having a good time.

Australian statistics show that if you are informed about safe partying, you are more likely to protect yourself and your friends.

A range of hazards

Some of the things that can go wrong at teenage parties and clubs include:

- Binge drinking
- Drink driving
- Unprotected sex
- Drug overdose
- Drink spiking
- Sexual assault
- Gatecrashing
- Fighting
- Injury
- Getting arrested.

General suggestions

Make smart decisions, including:

- Remember that you don't have to use alcohol or other drugs to have fun.
- Eat well before you leave home. A full stomach slows the absorption of alcohol.
- Drink in moderation. Don't let others top up your drinks and go for low alcohol options wherever possible.
- The best way to avoid drug-related problems is not to use at all. If you do, make sure you know what you're taking and find out how to reduce the risks of overdose or injury.
- Trust your own judgement. Don't let peer pressure sway you into doing anything you don't want to do.
- Keep your wits about you and stay close to friends you trust.
- Take condoms with you if you think you might end up having sex – and use them.
- Don't get into a car with a driver who has been drinking.
- Remember that your judgement may be impaired if you've been drinking or taking drugs – don't take risks you may regret such as diving into water if you don't know how deep it is or fooling around near swimming pools.
- Leave for somewhere safe if you feel unsafe at a venue or party.

Plan the night out

If you're going out with friends to party, safety suggestions include:

- Know where you're going and how you're getting there.
- Plan how to get home – for example, take enough money to share a taxi or nominate a driver to stay sober.

- Have a plan B to get home if plan A falls through – for example, ask someone’s parent if they will pick you up if you can’t get a taxi.
- Decide to stay together in a group and look after each other.
- Don’t leave drinks unattended and don’t accept a drink from a stranger. Don’t take your eyes off your drink.
- Decide on a drink limit and stick to it. Avoid ‘shouts’ or drinking games. You are likely to make silly or even dangerous decisions when you have had too much to drink.
- Remember that it is illegal to drink alcohol on the street or in a public place or to carry or use illicit drugs. You could be arrested and conviction may impact on your future employment or travel plans.

Avoid potentially violent situations

Alcohol and some drugs can lead to physical fights and assault. Suggestions include:

- Don’t lose control as a result of using drugs or alcohol. Pace yourself.
- Decide with friends beforehand to look out for each other.
- Don’t get into a verbal argument if someone aggressively confronts you. Walk away.
- Don’t go off with a person you’ve only just met. Stay in the public place. If they interest you, get a phone number.
- Seek help and advice from your doctor, a social worker or alcohol and drug worker if you tend to pick fights when you’re drunk or on drugs.

Overdoses can be avoided

Drugs can cause many health problems including overdose. Safety suggestions include:

- Educate yourself about drugs and their effects. There are easy-to-read fact sheets on the Better Health Channel.
- Tell a friend what you are taking if you intend to take an illegal drug. They can advise the ambulance staff if necessary.
- Don’t assume that medications are a safer option than illegal drugs. Medications can be dangerous, even life threatening, if used incorrectly.
- Remember that illegal drugs are not manufactured to a precise formula like medicines. An illegal drug may be much stronger than you expect. It may not actually be the drug you think it is, but may contain something else.
- Be aware that mixing alcohol and drugs can put you in extreme danger of overdose. The depressant effects of alcohol can mask the effects of stimulant drugs like speed.
- Never use alone and don’t share needles.

Safe partying at home

If you are throwing a party at home, safety suggestions include:

- Register your party with your local police at least one week in advance.
- Insist that the party is ‘invitation only’ to reduce the risk of gatecrashers. Ask your guests not to spread the word to others via SMS or the Internet.
- Indicate clearly on the invitation whether the party is ‘alcohol free’ or if alcohol is provided or is BYO. Say whether cigarette smoking is permitted. State firmly that illegal drugs are not welcome.
- Ask parents of party guests to call beforehand for more information.
- Ask parents of guests to provide transport to and from the party.
- Secure all valuables on your property.
- Make sure you have responsible adults on hand to monitor the party.
- Make sure the host (and the host’s parents and other responsible adults) remain sober so that any problems can be dealt with quickly and safely.
- Consider a hired security guard; it may seem extreme, but it could give you (and your guests) additional peace of mind.
- Serve plenty of food. Guests are more likely to get drunk on an empty stomach. Avoid salty foods, which may encourage guests to drink.
- Serve plenty of water and soft drinks.
- Be vigilant if you have a swimming pool – intoxicated guests may fall in.
- Turn the music down after midnight.

- Have a plan of action if a guest becomes drunk or ill.
- Ask gatecrashers to leave immediately or threaten that the police will be called. Follow through with your threats.
- Call the police if you feel that a situation is beyond your control.

Safe partying for guests at a home party

If you've been invited to a party at someone's home, safety suggestions include:

- Don't advertise the party via SMS or the Internet. You risk gatecrashers and violent situations.
- Arrange for your parents to drive you to the party and pick you up at a designated time.
- Give your parents the host's phone numbers.
- Take soft drink, not alcohol.
- Don't keep quiet and allow unsafe behaviour. If you are concerned at all, speak to the host, the host's parents or the designated 'responsible adults'.

How to help a friend in need

If your friend is suffering from the effects of alcohol or drugs or needs assistance, suggestions include:

- Always dial triple zero (000) for an ambulance in an emergency. Don't avoid calling the ambulance because you're afraid the police may become involved. Your friend may suffer serious consequences if you delay getting them help. Ambulance officers only care about saving lives.
- Stay close by your friend and monitor their wellbeing. Offer reassurance.
- **If your friend is unconscious**, lay them on their side to reduce the risk of aspirating (breathing in) vomit.
- **If they are not breathing**, commence cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). If you don't know how to perform CPR, call 000 and emergency services staff will guide you over the phone. The ambulance officers will take over as soon as they arrive.
- **If your friend has been assaulted**, or thinks they may have been drugged and assaulted, encourage them to immediately contact the police or go to the emergency department of the nearest hospital. Offer your support.

It's a good idea to read ReachOut.com's fact sheet on helping a drunk friend, so that you have some good strategies for helping drunk friends at: Reach Out - Helping a drunk friend.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Police, call triple zero (000)
- Ambulance, call triple zero (000)
- Emergency department of your nearest hospital
- Kids Helpline Tel. 1800 551 800
- DirectLine Tel. 1800 888 236 – for 24-hour confidential drug and alcohol telephone counselling, information and referral
- Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS) Tel.1800 014 446 – for young people, 24-hour confidential drug and alcohol telephone counselling, information and referral
- DrugInfo Tel. 1300 85 85 84 – for information
- Family Planning Victoria Tel. 1800 013 952 or (03) 9257 0100
- Melbourne Sexual Health Centre Tel. (03) 9341 6200 or 1800 032 017 or TTY (for the hearing impaired) (03) 9347 8619
- Melbourne Sexual Health Centre Tel. (03) 9341 6200 or 1800 032 017
- Action Centre (for young people 25 and under) Tel: (03) 9654 4766 or 1800 013 952
- Sexual Assault Crisis Line and CASA Tel. 1800 806 292
- National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service (Australia) Tel. 1800 737 732 – free telephone counselling hotline (24 hours, 7 days)
- 1800RESPECT – for real-time online counselling
- Victims of Crime Helpline 1800 819 817
- Parentline Tel. 132 289
- Victoria Police Party Safe program – call your local police station

- Family Drug Help – for information and support for people concerned about a relative or friend using drugs Tel. 1300 660 068

Things to remember

- Some of the things that can go wrong when teenagers are partying include binge drinking, drink driving, arrest, unprotected sex, drink spiking, sexual assault, injury and drug overdose.
- Australian statistics show that teenagers who are informed about safe partying are more likely to protect themselves and their friends.
- Know where you're going, how you're getting there and how you're getting home.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Reach Out

Content on this website is provided for education and information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not imply endorsement and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. Content has been prepared for Victorian residents and wider Australian audiences, and was accurate at the time of publication. Readers should note that, over time, currency and completeness of the information may change. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions.

For the latest updates and more information, visit www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Copyright © 1999/2012 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.