Partying safely – tips for teenagers

Summary

- If you know how to party safely it will help you and your friends stay safe while you’re having a good time.
- Partying safely can help you avoid drinking too much and engaging in risky behaviour such as drink driving and unprotected sex.
- If you’re going partying, plan ahead – arrange to stay close to friends you trust, and have a plan for how you’re going to get home.
- Decide on a drinks limit and stick to it.
- Take condoms with you if you think you might end up having sex.
- If you plan to take drugs, make sure someone knows what you’re taking, in case anything goes wrong.
- Remember that you don’t have to use alcohol or other drugs to have fun.

Partying risks

Parties give people a chance to get together, socialise and have fun. Where alcohol and other drugs come into the mix, risky behaviour becomes more likely. This means things like:

- drinking too much alcohol (sometimes called binge drinking)
- wanting to drive after drinking
- unprotected or non-consensual sex
- drink spiking
- drug overdose or alcohol poisoning
- getting into a fight
- getting injured.

Plan ahead to party safely

If you’re going partying, plan ahead. It’s easier to make smart decisions before you’re in the thick of things, so make some decisions before you go.

- Arrange to stay close to friends you trust. Ask your friends to look out for you, and let them know you will do the same for them.
- Work out how you’re going to get home – have some money for a taxi, arrange for someone to pick you up, or make sure that someone is the designated driver, and that they won’t be drinking or taking drugs.
- 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.
- Eat well before you leave home. A full stomach slows the absorption of alcohol.
- If you are going to drink alcohol, drink in moderation. Decide on your limit and stick to it.
- Take condoms with you if you think you might end up having sex. If you do, use them.
- The best way to avoid drug-related problems is not to use at all. If you do plan to take drugs, make sure you know what you’re taking, and let someone else know too, in case anything goes wrong. Find out how to reduce the risks of overdose or injury.
- Be aware that it is illegal to drink alcohol on the street or in a public place or to carry or use illicit drugs. Even if you’re not actively drinking, if you’re drunk in public you can be arrested.

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Safe partying tips

While you’re out:

- Don’t let others top up your drinks, and go for low alcohol options wherever possible. Occupy your hands with soft drink or water once you’ve reached your limit, so you’re not tempted to keep buying alcohol drinks. Avoid ‘shouts’ or drinking games. You are more likely to make silly or even dangerous decisions when you have had too much to drink.
- To avoid drink spiking, buy your own drinks and watch the bartender make or open them. Don’t take your eyes off your drink. Keep it with you, or get a new one if you have to leave it unattended. Don’t accept drinks from other people unless you accept it from the bartender yourself.
- Never mix drugs with alcohol or other drugs.
- Don’t get into a car with a driver who has been drinking.
- Don’t let peer pressure sway you into doing anything you don’t want to do. It’s okay to say no.
- Leave for somewhere safe if you feel unsafe at a venue or party.
- 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.

Avoiding potentially violent situations

Alcohol and some drugs can make people violent or aggressive, which can lead to physical fights and assault. Suggestions include:

- Pace yourself so that you don’t lose control as a result of using alcohol or other drugs.
- 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.
- Don’t get into a verbal argument if someone aggressively confronts you. Walk away.
- Decide with friends beforehand to look out for each other. If things take a turn for the worse, move away from situation.
- 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.

Avoiding drug overdose

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

- Educate yourself about drugs and their effects. 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.
- If you think someone has overdosed, call triple zero (000) for an ambulance. The paramedics will only get the police involved if they feel threatened, or if someone has died.

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 gate-crashers 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’.

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 gate-crashers. 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.
- Invite 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 that you, as the host (and your parents, carers or other responsible adults), remain sober so you can deal with any problems quickly and safely.
- Consider hiring a 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. This might involve arranging for them to get home safely, or calling 000 if they’re seriously ill.
- Ask gate-crashers 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.

How to help a friend in need

If your friend is suffering from the effects of alcohol or drugs or needs help, 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 their risk of breathing in vomit.
- **If they are not breathing**, start 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.

Where to get help

- 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

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- **Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS)** Tel. **1800 458 685** – for young people, 24-hour confidential drug and alcohol telephone counselling, information and referral
- **DrugInfo** Tel. **1300 85 85 84** – for information
- **Melbourne Sexual Health Centre** Tel. **(03) 9341 6200** or 1800 032 017 or TTY (for the hearing impaired) **(03) 9347 8619**
- **Family Planning Victoria Action Centre** (for young people 25 and under) Tel: **(03) 9660 4700 or 1800 013 952**
- **Sexual Assault Crisis Line** and **CASA** Tel. **1800 806 292**
- **1800RESPECT National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service** Tel. **1800 737 732** – free telephone counselling hotline (24 hours, 7 days)
- **Victims of Crime Helpline** Tel. **1800 819 817**
- **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**

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