

Brain Science: The Toll of Underage Drinking

FROM THE DESK OF
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Partners

Governor's Council
on Alcohol and Drugs

OLCC - Oregon Liquor
Control Commission

Ecumenical Ministries
of Oregon

OPERA - Oregon
Prevention Education
Recovery Association

Oregon Partnership

ACCBO - Addiction
Counselor Certification
Board of Oregon

AOC - Association
of Oregon Counties

AFSCME - American
Federation of State,
County and Municipal
Employees

AOCMHP - Association
of Oregon Community
Mental Health Programs

CARSA - Community
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The Science of Addiction: Addiction is a brain disease. As with other chronic diseases, there are often multiple contributing factors, including genetics and environment. We also know that alcohol and other drugs cause permanent changes to brain functioning by interrupting communication and feedback between brain pathways, affecting a person's ability to reason and their behavior.

The Adolescent Brain: The teenager's brain is different than the adult brain. The prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that enables people to assess situations, make sound decisions, and keep their emotions and desires under control, does not fully develop until our early to mid-twenties. Adults would have to consume twice as many drinks to suffer the same damage that alcohol inflicts on adolescents and even occasional heavy drinking injures young brains.



- Kids who drink score lower on general information and memory recall
- Adolescent drinkers are more likely to fall behind academically
- Adolescent drinkers have an increased risk of social problems, depression, suicidal thoughts and violence
- Alcohol affects the sleep cycle which leads to a disruption in the release of hormones necessary for normal growth and maturation.

According to a recent Oregon survey, nearly 29% of our 8th graders drank alcohol in the past 30 days. That is 80% higher than the national average.

Treatment Need vs Publicly Served



One in every 11 youth ages 12-17 need alcohol and drug treatment. Oregon's publicly-funded treatment met 24% of the total need in 2007.

(Oregon Department of Human Services, 2009)