

## Alcohol and Youth Facts

- Alcohol is a leading cause of death among youth, particularly teenagers. It contributes substantially to adolescent motor vehicle crashes, other traumatic injuries, suicide, date rape, and family and school problems.<sup>1</sup>
- Every day, on average, 11,318 American youth (12 to 20 years of age) try alcohol for the first time, compared with 6,488 for marijuana; 2,786 for cocaine; and 386 for heroin.<sup>2</sup>
- Alcohol is by far the most used and abused drug among America's teenagers. According to a national survey, nearly one third (31.5%) of all high school students reported hazardous drinking (5+ drinks in one setting) during the 30 days preceding the survey.<sup>3</sup>
- Children who are drinking alcohol by 7<sup>th</sup> grade are more likely to report academic problems, substance use, and delinquent behavior in both middle school and high school. By young adulthood, early alcohol use was associated with employment problems, other substance abuse, and criminal and other violent behavior.<sup>4</sup>
- Young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcoholism than those who begin drinking at 21.<sup>5</sup>
- More than 1,700 college students in the U.S. are killed each year—about 4.65 a day—as a result of alcohol-related injuries.<sup>6</sup>



<sup>1</sup>*Ninth Special Report to the U.S. Congress on Alcohol and Health from the Secretary of Health and Human Services.* Rockville, MD: USDHHS, Public Health Service, Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, Jun 1997. Kann, L., Warren, C., et al., Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 1995. *Morb Mortal Wkly Rep CDC Surveillance Summaries*, 45(4):1-84, Sep 27, 1996.

<sup>2</sup>Data reported by Jill Schmidlein, White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse, Feb 13, 1998. The data were extrapolated from *Preliminary Estimates from the 1996 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse*, Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), 1997.

<sup>3</sup>Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 1999. June 09, 2000 / 49(SS05);1-96 Kann, L., S. Kinchen, B. Williams, J. Ross, R. Lowry, J. Grunbaum, and L. Kolbe., [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss4905a1.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss4905a1.htm) accessed June 19, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Ellickson, P., Tucker, J., and Klein, D. Ten-year prospective study of public health problems associated with early drinking. *Pediatrics* 111(5):949-955, 2003.

<sup>5</sup>Grant, B., and Dawson, D. Age at onset of alcohol use and its association with DSM-IV alcohol abuse and dependence: Results from the National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic Survey. *Journal of Substance Abuse*, Vol. 9, Jan. 1998. pp. 103-110.

<sup>6</sup>Magnitude of Alcohol-Related Mortality and Morbidity Among U.S. College Students Ages 18-24: Changes from 1998 to 2001; Ralph Hingson, Timothy Heeren, Michael Winter, Henry Wechsler; *Annual Review of Public Health*, April 2005, Vol. 26: pp. 259-279.