

Guidance on the Consumption of Alcohol by Children and Young People

The Chief Medical Officer for England's guidance for on the consumption of alcohol by children and young people makes 5 key recommendations¹.

1. Children and their parents and carers are advised that an alcohol-free childhood is the healthiest and best option. However, if children drink alcohol, it should not be until at least the age of 15 years.
2. If young people aged 15 to 17 years consume alcohol, it should always be with the guidance of a parent or carer or in a supervised environment.
3. Parents and young people should be aware that drinking, even at age 15 or older, can be hazardous to health and that not drinking is the healthiest option for young people.

If 15 to 17 year olds do consume alcohol, they should do so infrequently and certainly on no more than one day a week. Young people aged 15 to 17 years should never exceed recommended adult daily limits* and, on days when they drink, consumption should usually be below such levels.

4. The importance of parental influences on children's alcohol use should be communicated to parents, carers and professionals. Parents and carers require advice on how to respond to alcohol use and misuse by children.
5. Support services must be available for children and young people who have alcohol-related problems and their parents.

* This guidance was drafted in 2009 and it referenced the adult daily limits for women (2-3units) and men (3-4units) which were contained adult guidance applicable at the time.

¹ CMO for England (2009) Guidance on the consumption of alcohol by children and young people