



Bad habits can start at home.

Family drinking not advised

Many parents think introducing teenagers to alcohol in moderation will teach them to drink responsibly. But researchers from the University of Minnesota have found instead that drinking under parental supervision makes teens more likely to develop serious substance-abuse problems later on. The team surveyed nearly 2,000 teens, about half of them from America and half from Australia, where underage drinking with parents is more common. By the 8th grade, 67 percent of the Aussie kids had tried alcohol with an adult present, compared with 35 percent of the Americans. A year later, 36 percent of the Australian teens said they'd blacked out, gotten in a fight, or otherwise had trouble controlling themselves around alcohol; only 21 percent of the Americans had had similar problems. "The study makes it clear you shouldn't be drinking with your kids," lead researcher Barbara McMorris tells *MSNBC.com*. Parental approval leads to more experimentation by teens, who often lack the judgment to restrain their intake. They're also more likely to be damaged by alcohol. "The teenage brain is much more vulnerable," says Mary O'Connor, a behavioral scientist at UCLA. "Repeated drinking can lead to long-term deficits in learning and memory."