



TCNJ THE COLLEGE OF
NEW JERSEY



Tips for Healthy Communication About Alcohol

Brought to you by the Alcohol and Drug Education
Program (ADEP) and the Division of Student Affairs



Congratulations on your student's acceptance to The College of New Jersey! We look forward to welcoming them to our community and being their home away from home.

All too often, we turn on the news to stories of incidents, injuries, and even deaths related to college parties and the consumption of alcohol. In an effort to keep our student's safe while at The College of New Jersey, the Alcohol and Drug Education Program (ADEP) has created this handbook to help you stay involved and talk about this important issue. We know that you want your students to get the most out of their college experience and to do so while remaining healthy and safe.

One of the best ways to keep your student safe is for you to talk with them about the dangers of alcohol misuse and strategies to prevent it.

While we know these conversations are not always easy, the information that follows may serve as a guide. Please feel free to reach out to us anytime at hadgej@tcnj.edu or 609-771-2572.

Thank you,

Joe Hadge, MA, SAC, LCADC

Assistant Director for ADEP

Parents Have a Role in Preventing Alcohol Misuse

- Research shows that parents can and do affect their children's drinking habits even while they are away at school
- Effective, intentional conversations about alcohol can help reduce binge drinking and improve students' resistance to peer pressure
- Parental modeling and feedback at home have been shown to be among the strongest predictors of college alcohol use
- Parents discussing with their children the decision to drink or not has been found to help students make more informed choices and, often, drink less

Our culture is full of ideas, images, and myths about college drinking. It can be hard for students (and even parents!) to know what's true, what matters, and what we should ignore.

Before we see some tips on how to talk with our students, let's get a few facts straight.

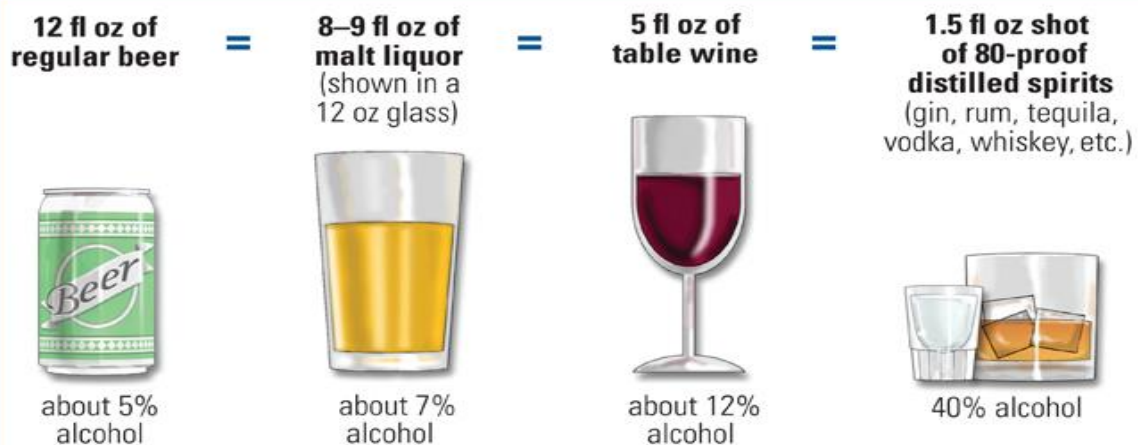
The Truth about College Drinking

- Many students assume drinking is just part of the college experience but...
- Not every college student drinks, in fact, 20% of TCNJ students report choosing not to do so. Over 50% of our students report moderate drinking of staying between 0-4 drinks.
- However, students 18 to 24 are considered high-risk drinkers and are more likely to binge drink and engage in unsafe behaviors surrounding alcohol (a binge is considered 4 drinks for women and 5 for men in a sitting [~4 hours])
- The consequences of heavy drinking include, but are not limited to, decreased academic performance, disciplinary consequences, legal consequences, increased rates of injury and assault, and unplanned sexual activity

Understanding how alcohol affects the body and brain often goes undiscussed with young adults. Every student can benefit from the following quick facts found on page 4.

How Alcohol Affects the Body

- Alcohol is a drug absorbed through the stomach and intestines, it is broken down at a constant rate by the liver. We CANNOT speed up the removal of alcohol (the sobering up process); coffee, cold showers, and sleep do not help
- A BAC of .10 means 1 out of 1000 drops of blood in the body is alcohol, at this level, most students will be very drunk, this is the level for most people to “black-out”
- Each standard drink (12oz beer, 5oz wine, 1oz hard liquor) increases one’s BAC the same amount
- In general, the liver removes, on average, one standard drink’s (1 oz) worth of pure alcohol from the body per hour
- **Physical size, gender, rate of alcohol consumption, and the use of other drugs all affect how intoxicated one becomes and how quickly**
- **At TCNJ, we most often hear students report that they got sick or suffer other consequences from drinking when they were drinking quickly, specifically while taking shots of hard liquor**



The percent of “pure” alcohol, expressed here as alcohol by volume (alc/vol), varies by beverage.

Here are some tips on having conversations about alcohol and other drug use with your student. We know these topics can be difficult at times, but with this information we hope to make it a little easier.

General Tips for Productive Conversations

- Choose the right time. For example, as both of you are running out for the day may not be the most conducive time to communicate
- Communicate intentionally: set aside time for this and have a goal, also try to avoid having important conversations while immersed in another activity
- Avoid conversation enders: short statements with no alternative answer or absolutes like “Anyone who drinks that much is crazy”
- Conflict is normal: agree to take a break and come back to a topic if the conversation goes astray
- Avoid debating: you’re not necessarily trying to prove a point so much as opening a dialogue

More Tips for Improving Communication

- Students tend to be open to talk, but it often needs to start with listening, ask questions to get started
- Avoid lecturing and scare tactics
- Be willing to trust them, show that you believe in their ability to make healthy choices
- Some students fear being punished, they feel that if they open up about their thoughts about drinking they won’t be allowed to see friends or go out. Reassure them that this is not about restrictions
- Many students think they already know all there is to know about alcohol, being ready with the relevant information, after listening to what they think, can make the conversation more credible

Talking About Alcohol

- Begin by asking questions about what your student's beliefs and expectations are about drinking in college
- Explore reasons students may drink and reasons they choose not to
- Provide information about college drinking and how alcohol affects the body
- Provide clear expectations regarding alcohol use

Answering Tough Questions

- Be prepared to respond to difficult or awkward questions, such as did "Well, did you drink in college?"
- If there is alcohol use at home, talk to students about responsible use and what is and is not permissible
- If asked if you drank as a student, it is important to be honest, but not to romanticize the idea. Use your experience to explain expectations and lessons you learned
- If your son or daughter knows someone who drinks heavily and has not experienced any adverse consequences, be ready to talk about what could happen or how escaping consequences is an exception



For even more information, checkout

[The National Institute on Health's
Fact Sheet](#)

A Focus on Healthy Goals Can Reduce Alcohol Misuse

- Encourage physical health and nutrition
- If your child has goals relating to these, discussing how alcohol can be antithetical to them may help them develop motivation to drink less
- Help your student learn techniques to manage academic pressures and other stressors
- Teach strategies to socialize without alcohol, such as joining clubs, teams, or organizations on campus
- Encourage your student to seek help if they experience anxiety, stress, depression, or other mental health concerns
- TCNJ's wellness magazine: [Student Health 101](#)
 - All students are emailed Student Health 101 monthly, with tips for healthy living.
- Student Health 101 provides a [The Student Advocate](#) magazine for parents and caregivers of TCNJ students – you can sign up for the monthly email!



THRIVE

Campus Resources

- **The Collegiate Recovery Program (CRP)**
freemanc@tcnj.edu; 609-771-2134
- **Alcohol and Drug Education Program (ADEP)**
hadgej@tcnj.edu; 609-771-2572
 - All TCNJ students have 24 hour access to eCheckupToGo, a well-researched tool that gives individual feedback about a person's alcohol habits. It can be found here: <https://interwork.sdsu.edu/echeckup/usa/alc/coll/?id=TCNJ&hfs=true>
- **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**
caps@tcnj.edu; 609-771-2247
- **Student Health Services**
health@tcnj.edu; 609-771-2889
- **Anti-Violence Initiatives (AVI)**
oavi@tcnj.edu; 609-771-2571
- **Online Wellness Link (OWL)** to schedule appointments for the above:
<https://tcnj.medicatconnect.com/>
- **Campus Police**
tcnjpd@tcnj.edu; 609-771-2345 or 911
- **Student Conduct**
conduct@tcnj.edu; 609-771-0718
- **Dean of Students Office**
amyhecht@tcnj.edu; 609-771-2201