

Drink less. Live more.



Shaping Alcohol-Free Environments for Our Kids

Drink less for our children

By hosting **alcohol-free** child focused events, we are taking steps to positively influence our children. As parents, our alcohol related behaviours can shape our child's beliefs and attitudes about alcohol. Research shows that exposure to parental alcohol use may result in preteen drinking¹.

Drink Less. Live More. project findings

The Northern Sydney Local Health District *Drink Less. Live More.* research project explored the role that alcohol plays in the lives of Northern Beaches women aged 35 – 59 years. Of the 583 women we surveyed, 60% reported that all gatherings with children had alcohol present.

Why drink less?

The *First 2000 Days Framework* outlines that the first 2000 days (0-5 years) of life is a critical time for physical, cognitive, social and emotional health. Early life experiences are linked to increased risk of drug and alcohol misuse².

“ I don't want my children to grow up thinking excessive alcohol consumption is normal ”

DrinkLess.LiveMore. research respondent.

Studies show that parents play a significant and powerful role in shaping their child's beliefs and attitudes about alcohol, through their role-modelling of alcohol-related behaviours. Parental role-modelling of alcohol use is known to influence alcohol consumption in adolescence and in later life⁴.

One of the key strategies of the *Drink Less. Live More.* project is to reduce alcohol availability in child-focused gatherings by highlighting the importance of positive parent role modelling. According to the Australian Alcohol Guidelines⁵ children under 18 years of age should not drink alcohol to reduce the risk of injury and other harms to health.

Parents and adults can positively shape a young person's understanding of the role alcohol may, or may not, play in their life. At a child-oriented gathering, this can be achieved simply by hosting an event without alcohol.

1. Smit K, Otten R, Voogt C, Kleinjan M, Engels R, Kuntsche E. Exposure to drinking mediates the association between parental alcohol use and preteen alcohol use. *Addict Behav.* 2018 Dec; 87:244-250. doi: 10.1016/j.addbeh.2018.07.026. Epub 2018 Aug 1. PMID: 30096655.
2. NSW Ministry of Health. *The First 2000 Days Framework.* February 2019. Available at www.health.nsw.gov.au. Accessed 22nd June 2021.
3. Bowden, J. A., Delfabbro, P., Room, R., Miller, C. & Wilson, C. (2019). Parental drinking in Australia: Does the age of children in the home matter? *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 38(3): 306-15.
4. Randolph, K.A., Cheatham, L.P., Weiss, U.K. et al. Exposure to Parent and Peer Alcohol Use and the Risk of Drinking Onset and Escalation Among Adolescents. *Child Adolesc Soc Work J* 35, 97–106 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-017-0516-2>
5. National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australian Alcohol Guidelines (revised 2020). Available at: www.health.gov.au/news/australian-alcohol-guidelines-revised Accessed 27 September 2021.

What can you do?

Parents & Families

- Host alcohol-free children's birthday parties & kids play dates
- Choose to drink non-alcoholic beverages when attending a child's birthday party & other children's events
- Think twice before asking your child(ren) to obtain alcohol from the fridge for you
- Ensure gifts to teachers and school staff are alcohol-free

Early Childhood Education & Care Centres

- Host alcohol-free:
 - parent information nights
 - preschool graduations

Primary & High Schools

- Host alcohol-free:
 - Formals and pre-formal gatherings
 - School fundraisers like raffles, school fetes and events
 - Parent and Citizens/Friends meetings



Health
Northern Sydney
Local Health District