

Binge drinking comes with serious consequences

By Barton Health

This summer, millions of young adults in the U.S. will “binge drink” their way through parties. Binge drinking is drinking to get drunk – the point at which the drinker is risking health or behavioral problems as a consequence of drinking alcohol.

Binge drinking means a man having five or more drinks, or a woman having four or more, in quick succession.

“Overall alcohol use among young people has decreased in recent years, but the number of binge drinkers remains high,” says Warren Withers, director of Emergency Services at Barton Memorial Hospital.

Risky behavior

Besides risk of death from an overdose, binge drinking involves other dangerous consequences, including:

- **Accidents.** Alcohol impairs sensory perceptions and reaction time.
- **Date rape.** Alcohol can be a significant factor in sexual assaults on young adults.
- **Unprotected sex.** Heavy drinkers are at greater risk for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. They also have a greater chance of pregnancy.
- **Violence.** Young people who drink are more likely to be victims of violent crime, including rape, aggravated assault, and robbery.

- **Alcoholism.** Some college students who abuse alcohol will become alcoholics. Chronic alcohol use can damage the liver and heart, as well as increase the risk for some cancers.
- **Bad grades.** Students who drink the most are at risk for having the worst grades.

Influencing your children

“Educating your kids about the risks of binge drinking and behavior patterns, as well as making your expectations clear as to their lifestyle and academic performance, is key,” Withers said.

Some ways to do that include:

- Checking your own behavior. Are you subconsciously promoting the idea that drinking to excess is OK.
- Working with your children’s education facilities. Encourage initiatives such as substance-free social events and dorms.
- Promoting awareness early in your child’s life. What parents say and do really can make a difference. The earlier you start your prevention efforts, the better.

Need to talk?

If you are worried your teen or college-aged child may have a substance abuse problem, call Tahoe Youth & Family Services at (530) 541.2445 or, 24-hours-a-day call 800.870-8937. For a list of other resources, go online.