

# The legal drinking age

[Health & Medicine](#), [Alcoholism](#)



The Legal Drinking Age Kyra C. Lyons Bryant & Stratton College Phil 250  
Mike Sulak July 3, 2012 Increasing or decreasing the legal age at which people can purchase and drink alcohol has been a controversial issue for quite some time now. Some people say that it should be lowered because teens drink anyway, some say that it should increase or the stay the same due to health risk. There are many other viewpoints to both sides and in this paper we are going to explore both sides to the story Some believe that the legal drinking age should be lowered and we are going to explore why. They say if a person can go to war, shouldn't he or she be able to have a beer? They American society has determined that upon turning 18 teenagers become adults. This means that they can enlist into the military to serve, fight, and potentially die for their country. Most importantly at age 18 you become legally responsible for your own actions. You can buy cigarettes even though in time you know that they can give you lung cancer. You may even purchase property, sign contracts, take out a loan, vote, hold office, serve on a jury, or adopt a child. But strangely at 18, one cannot buy a beer. In most other countries, the age of majority coincides with the legal drinking or purchasing age. Lots of people drink before they turn 21, despite the current legal drinking age. Doesn't that prove that the policy is ineffective? The trend over the past decade is that fewer 12-20 year olds are drinking, but those who choose to drink are drinking more. Between 1993 and 2001, the rate of 20 year old who reported consuming alcohol in the past 30 days decreased from 33. 4% to 29. 3%, while the rate for binge drinking increased among the age group over those same years, from 15. 2% to 18. 9%. (Teens at risk, 2009, p. 2). Furthermore, as compared to 1993, more 18-24 year olds

who chose to drink in 2001 were drinking excessively. This was defined by frequency of drinking, frequency of drunkenness, and drinking to get drunk. The youth in other countries are exposed to alcohol at earlier age and engage in less alcohol abuse and have healthier attitudes toward alcohol. Don't those countries have fewer alcohol-related problems than we do? Though the drinking age is lower in other countries, the United States has a higher rate for dangerous intoxication occasions than many other countries, also much higher levels of per capita consumption. Recent research published by the World Health Organization found that while 15 and 16 year old teens in many European states, where the drinking age is 18 or younger and often unenforced, have more drinking occasions per month, they have fewer dangerous, intoxication occasions than other American counterparts. (Teens at risk, 2009, p. 3). How about if we educate teens about using alcohol safely starting at age 18, would that encourage responsible drinking? The effectiveness of alcohol education is a continuing debate. Various approaches to alcohol education have been developed and can generally be grouped into two sides, those that support abstinence and those that view abstinence as unrealistic. There is formal education through schools and institutions, and informal education through family and peers. While alcohol educations that advocate abstinence have been proven ineffective, interactive education programs have had greater success in not only the ability to educate drinkers, but also alter their drinking habits. (Teens at risk, 2009, p. 4). Most evidence in support of moderate alcohol use comes from the cardiovascular research. According to alcohol researcher Eric Rimm, Sc. D., of Harvard's School of Public Health, about 50 randomized studies show

that when consumed in moderation, alcohol increases high-density lipoprotein cholesterol and decreases blood clotting and insulin resistance, all of which reduce the risk of heart disease due to diabetes, high blood pressure and previous heart attack. (Alcohol abuse, 2008, p. 2). Several studies also suggest that moderate alcohol use lowers the risk of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. One trial of almost 6, 000 volunteers at Boston's Beth Israel Deaconess