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WHAT IS MYSTUDENTBODY.COM ALCOHOL (MSB ALCOHOL)

On college campuses across the country, alcohol use by underage students, binge drinking and its negative impact are of increasing concern. Carleton is no exception. The following excerpt from the Carleton College Student Handbook introduces the philosophy upon which Carleton's policies on Alcohol and Other Drugs are based.

"Carleton College is committed to promoting responsible behavior regarding the use of alcoholic beverages. As an educational institution, the College provides resources through which students are empowered to inform themselves about the physiological, psychological, and sociological effects of alcohol and other drugs upon the individual and the community."

MyStudentBody.com Alcohol is one such resource. This alcohol prevention and education website is a part of the overall MSB.com suite of programs to which Carleton subscribes. An important aspect of the program is a self-administered risk assessment that personalizes information based on a student's alcohol-related beliefs, behaviors, and experiences. All incoming students have been asked to visit the site and complete the FIRST-YEAR curriculum prior to arriving on campus this fall.

In addition to alcohol, other components of the site address other issues central to college students, including sexually transmitted diseases, tobacco, stress, drug use, and nutrition. The MSB Alcohol development team consisted of experts in addiction, education, and psychology. College students were also part of the team to ensure that the site would be fun and engaging for students. The website incorporates scientific principles known to influence change in alcohol-related attitudes and behaviors. A central feature of the website is a risk assessment. Here, students answer questions about their own risk beliefs and behaviors and receive individualized feedback based on their responses.

Other parts of the website are personalized to the student based on his or her responses to the risk assessment. Such personalization guides the user to the content areas most relevant to him or her. A multitude of articles, interactive tools, and tips for dealing with tough situations are included with the goal of increasing students' motivation to limit their drinking. Engaging, animated audio peer stories provide students with an array of coping skills to avoid drinking too much in tempting situations or to avoid alcohol altogether.

Of course, parents are essential partners in the effort to promote responsible choices about alcohol. The information that students will explore through MyStudentBody.com, along with the resources that exist on campus through the Wellness Center and the Dean of Students Office will influence student decisions, but it is also important that your son or daughter is aware of your perspectives on alcohol use.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR COLLEGE STUDENT ABOUT ALCOHOL:

- Stay tuned in to your son/daughter. Stay in touch with popular youth culture such as music, media, and apparel, as well as your son's/daughter's particular interests and opinions.
- Ask his or her opinion regarding current news items related to alcohol.
- Get informed. Know the alcohol policies of the college/university. Learn about the alcohol regulations, penalties, and interventions used on campus.

1 The Carleton Student Handbook can be found at http://webapps.acs.carleton.edu/campus/dos/handbook/

To find out more about MyStudentbody.com Alcohol, please go to mystudentbody.com and select More About MSB.
- Set clear and realistic expectations regarding academic performance.
- Support your son/daughter in standing up for his or her right to a safe academic environment.
- Discuss strategies for how to intervene with a friend who has problems with alcohol.
- Be clear about your own values around alcohol. If you drink, present a positive role model around alcohol use.
- Additional suggestions are offered by the Century Council in their brochure Parents, You're Not Done Yet, which may be found online at: www.centurycouncil.org/lib/downloads/parents.pdf

**FIRST YEAR FOLLIES**

The transition to college can be one of the most stressful changes a person goes through. The move away from the familiar comforts of home, to the unknowns of a college campus, can put the senses on overload. For many first year students, starting college is the first time they've been away from home for any length of time. They are adjusting to the greater freedom and responsibilities of college life. It can be lots of fun to stay up all night, hang out with newfound friends, and wax philosophical. And it can be exciting to go to parties or clubs and not have to worry about a curfew.

The trouble is, the temptations that go with the parties and freedom can often feel like expectations. Such as when it seems like everyone else is downing a beer or has a drink in hand, or even when there's direct pressure to have, "just one more." Many students who arrive on campus for their first year have never used alcohol. For these kids, the temptations can be particularly powerful, unless they've made a firm commitment to themselves not to drink. Others may try alcohol when they get to college, "just to see what it's like." It can be hard for a student to find his or her limits when they have never had to set them before. Evidence shows that the first six weeks of college are critical to first year student success. Many students initiate dangerous drinking during these early days, and such drinking can get in the way of adapting to college life, particularly academically. Talking with your college student about recognizing limits is the first step to playing it safe.

**WARDING OFF TROUBLE: COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR COLLEGE STUDENT ABOUT ALCOHOL**

Alcohol abuse and dependence are not rare among college students. A recent study showed that six percent of students meet criteria for alcohol dependence, or addiction. About one out of three students (33%) meet criteria for alcohol abuse, defined as persistent alcohol-related negative consequences, such as decreased grades, legal problems, and difficulties in relationships. In addition, more than two out of every five students report at least one symptom of alcohol abuse, increasing their risk for developing a full-blown alcohol disorder. The risk is also higher for kids who frequently binge drink (5 or more in a row for men; 4 or more for women), or who started drinking when they were in middle school or high school.

While these numbers are alarming, they are a reality check for the extent of alcohol-related problems on college campuses. On a more optimistic note, the numbers also show that the majority of college students are not involved in dangerous drinking. While current survey indicate that approximately 44% of college undergraduates reported binge drinking at least once in the last two weeks, 56% had not. And in another survey, 47% of college students indicated they don't drink at all or have about one drink per week. There's a lot that parents and other adults can do to ward off potential alcohol problems in their college student. Open communication is a big part of deterrence.