

Mentoring

Development stages of youth.

Adolescence is a time of great change, when positive steps can be taken to reduce the potential for alcohol-related harms for young people.

Understanding how a young person develops can help to identify risk factors for alcohol-related harms.

Child development

5 to 9 years

The early child period is considered to be the most important developmental phase throughout the lifespan. Healthy early child development which includes the physical, social/emotional, and language/cognitive domains of development, each equally important – strongly influences well-being, mental health, physical health, academic progress, criminality and other life outcomes.



Alcohol impacts on brain development in young people

Adolescence is a time of significant growth and development inside the teenage brain. They are experiencing profound physical and emotional changes, they are heavily influenced by role models, and they may engage in increased risk-taking.

Drinking alcohol can impact brain development up until the age of 25 years – affecting cognitive abilities such as attention, memory, and decision-making. Australian guidelines recommend that young people delay their first drink until they are at least 18 years old.

10 to 13 years

The pre-teen years see lots of big changes – physical, emotional, cognitive and social. During this time, children's bodies, emotions and identities change in different ways at different times.

Early physical changes usually occur from about 10-11 years – but these can happen as young as eight, or as old as 14. This is probably the greatest period of physical growth since birth. It is not uncommon for young people to feel uncomfortable about themselves and their body for a period of time. Pre-teens may view themselves and their perspectives as the most important, and they may start to develop stronger peer relationships.

Teenagers

Teenagers might show strong feelings and intense emotions at different times.

Physical changes sometimes start happening as young as eight years, or these changes might only happen as the young person enters the teenage years even to the age of 14. A teenager might display more settled, introspective and self-conscious behaviour than a pre-teen.

They begin to develop the capacity to question world issues and formulate their own values, morals and rights, questioning and challenging the perspectives and beliefs of parents and adults. Risk-taking behaviour may become more prevalent and long-term consequences of their behaviour are often ignored.

