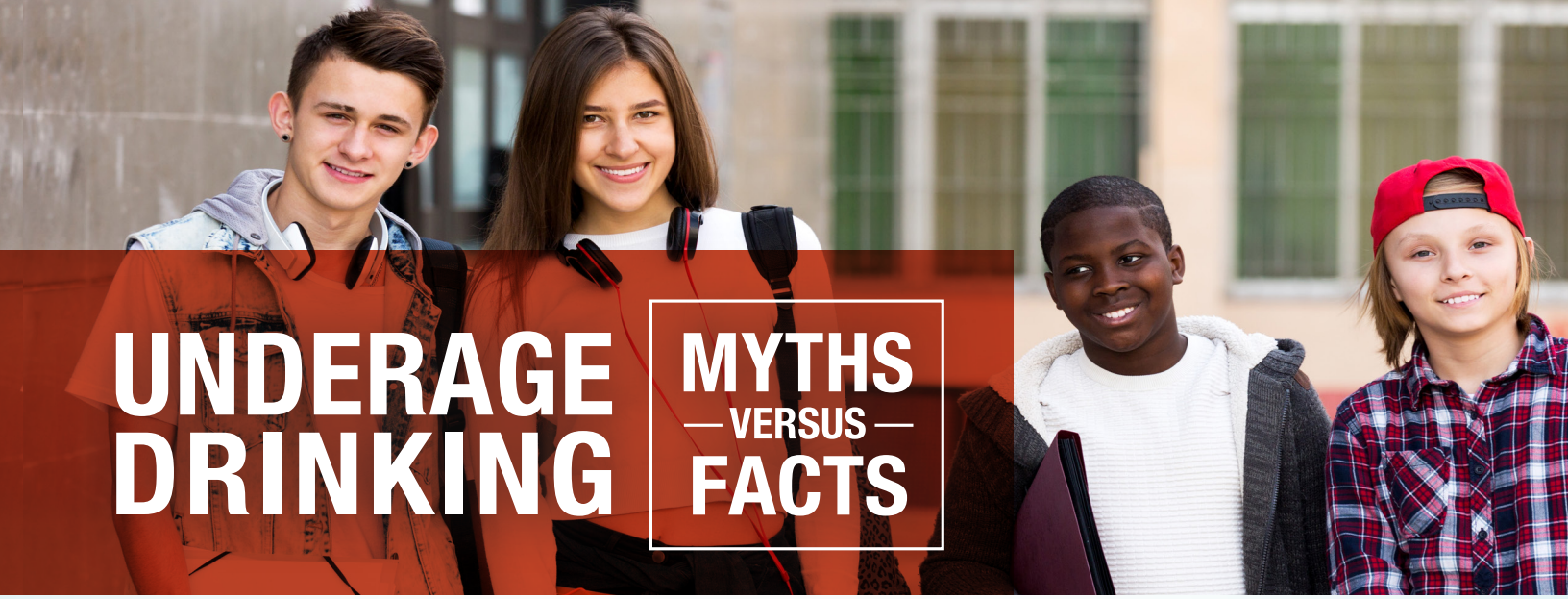

UNDERAGE DRINKING

MYTHS — VERSUS — FACTS

You probably see and hear a lot about alcohol—from TV, movies, music, social media, and your friends. But what are the real facts? Here are some common myths and facts about alcohol use.

MYTH All of the other kids drink alcohol. You need to drink to fit in.

FACT Don't believe the hype: Most young people don't drink alcohol! Research shows that almost 80 percent of 12- to 20-year-olds haven't had a drink in the past month.[1]

MYTH Drinking alcohol will make people like you.

FACT There's nothing likable about stumbling around, passing out, or puking on yourself. Drinking alcohol can also make your breath smell bad and cause you to gain weight.

MYTH Drinking is a good way to loosen up at parties.

FACT Drinking is a dumb way to loosen up. It can make you act foolish, say things you shouldn't say, and do things you wouldn't normally do. In fact, drinking can increase the likelihood of fights and sexual assaults.[2]

MYTH Alcohol isn't as harmful as other drugs.

FACT Your brain doesn't stop growing until about age 25, and drinking can affect how it develops.[3] Plus, alcohol increases your risk for many diseases, such as cancer.[4] It can also cause you to have accidents and get injured, sending you to the emergency room.[5]

MYTH Beer and wine are safer than liquor.

FACT Alcohol is alcohol. A 12-ounce beer, a 5-ounce glass of wine, and a shot of liquor (1.5 ounces) all have the same amount of alcohol.[6]

MYTH You can sober up quickly by taking a cold shower or drinking coffee.

FACT There's no magic cure to help you sober up. On average, it takes 2 to 3 hours for a single drink to make it through your body.[7] And there's nothing you can do to make that happen quicker.

MYTH There's no reason to wait until you're 21 to drink.

FACT When you're young, drinking alcohol can make learning new things more difficult.[8] Also, people who begin drinking before they turn 15 are more likely to develop a drinking problem at some point in their lives than those who begin drinking at age 21 or older,[9] when it is legal to drink in all states and Washington, D.C.[10]

MYTH You can drink alcohol and you won't get into trouble.

FACT All states and Washington, D.C., have 21-year-old minimum-drinking-age laws.[11] If you get caught drinking, you might have to pay a fine, do community service, take alcohol awareness classes, or even spend time in jail.

Think you or your friend has an alcohol problem?

Don't wait—get help. Talk to a parent, doctor, teacher, or anyone you trust.

If you're more comfortable speaking with someone you don't know, call the confidential SAMHSA National Helpline at 800–662–HELP (800–662–4357) (English and Spanish).

You can find substance abuse treatment services near you at **samhsa.gov/treatment**.

MORE INFO

Learn more about underage drinking at **stopalcoholabuse.gov** and **toosmarttostart.samhsa.gov**.

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