

Alcohol Intoxication in Young People



Beter voor elkaar

Information for parents after hospitalisation of their child due to alcohol intoxication (“binge drinking”)

Introduction

Your son or daughter was admitted to hospital suffering from alcohol poisoning. This can be a shocking experience for you and your child. This leaflet explains the significance of this hospital admission for you and your child. It also informs you about the after-care given to children admitted with alcohol poisoning. Finally, the consequences of drinking at a young age are described.

Consequences of alcohol poisoning

Children suffering from alcohol poisoning are in immediate mortal danger. They are unconscious and cannot always keep their airway free, if necessary. Moreover, patients may experience hypothermia and often suffer from secondary injuries caused by a fall or a fight.

Afterwards, children may well be unable to remember anything about the incident. While in hospital, your child’s “vital signs” – respiration, temperature and blood pressure – will be monitored. However, the long-term consequences must also be investigated, as alcohol poisoning may cause brain damage. This can result in poorer performance at school and behavioural changes in your child. These effects may occur even if your child has never consumed alcohol before.

Hospital admission

After your child has been received and stabilised at the Accident & Emergency (A&E) department, he or she will be admitted to the (paediatric) ward. Sometimes, an Intensive Care admission will be necessary. Our experience shows that if young persons are unconscious, they are often covered in their own vomit and frequently wet their pants. Sometimes, they can even respond very aggressively. The next morning, when they are awake, they have no memory of this period.

We recommend that you make a video or take pictures with your mobile telephone and show them to your child the next morning. Images often say more than words. It is our experience that children are very shocked by the images.

The paediatrician or physician will pay a visit the morning after admission. If there are no longer any medical reasons for your child to stay in hospital, a discharge meeting will be held with you and your child.

The after-care process

In view of the great risks of your child's drinking behaviour, an after-care process will be necessary. Maasstad Hospital has developed an after-care procedure for children who have had alcohol poisoning. Ikazia Hospital has made an agreement with Maasstad Hospital that all patients who suffered from alcohol poisoning will be monitored by them. We will make an appointment for you and your child. We assume that you and your child will attend this appointment, but we also want to point out that this appointment is mandatory. If you fail to attend the appointment, we will, as agreed with the collaborating hospitals in Rotterdam, transfer the file to 'Veilig Thuis AMHK' (Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Counselling and Reporting Centre) . During the process your child will be under the care of a paediatrician and a psychologist. The aim is to ensure that your child recovers properly after his/her admission and to prevent your child from consuming alcohol again. Research has shown that children's behaviour does not change automatically after the shock of experiencing alcohol poisoning; medical assistance will be needed to prevent any recurrence. It is also important that you, as the child's parents or carers, receive the right information. The after-care process at [Maasstad Hospital](#) includes the following steps:

1. Appointments with paediatrician and psychologist

Soon after your child has been discharged from the hospital, you and your child will be called to attend two appointments: an appointment with the paediatrician and an appointment with a psychologist, usually on different dates. At these appointments, your child's physical and emotional condition will be discussed.

How has your child fared after his/her alcohol poisoning? How has he/she performed at school and how have his/her social contacts been affected? Has he/she experienced physical complaints? If possible, it is preferable for both parents or carers to attend these appointments. Naturally, you will also be given the opportunity to ask questions.

2. Advice

Following the appointments with the paediatrician and the psychologist, you will be advised about any necessary follow-up steps. It may be that further examinations are required or that your child will need further support. If so, the hospital will arrange for the necessary examinations, support and/or referrals.

3. Evaluation

No more than six to eight months after the alcohol poisoning occurs, a final appointment will take place with the paediatrician and psychologist, following which the process will, in principle, come to an end. We will examine whether your child has benefited from the after-care process. If more after-care proves to be necessary, this will be discussed with you. It is important that the whole process be completed, as further problems – both physical and mental – as a result of the alcohol poisoning may arise some months after the incident.

The process described above is intended to prevent any future alcohol-related health problems in your child. As a parent, you can play your part by laying down clear rules for your child. We would advise you to forbid children under the age of 18 to consume alcohol.

Research has shown that when parents do this, the risk of excessive alcohol consumption is smaller than when parents allow children under the age of 16 to drink, even incidentally. If you are considering allowing children older than 16 to drink alcohol now and again, please bear in mind that a child's brain actually continues to develop until he/she reaches the age of 23.

Regular alcohol consumption has a negative impact on that development, particularly if more than five drinks are consumed at any one time. Such behaviour is referred to as 'binge drinking.' But even drinking small amounts on a regular basis can cause brain damage to young people. It is important for parents to set a good example and be clear about what a child may and may not do. If your rules are broken, make sure that you take action. The best way to treat your child is to be clear and consistent.

Talk about the risks

Consuming alcohol at a young age poses more risks than most youths and their parents realise. The risk of permanent brain damage has already been mentioned above. However, there are many other risks too. A detailed explanation of the risks, published by the Trimbos Institute (the national centre of expertise on mental health and addiction), is set out below.

Consequences of drinking at a young age

– Alcohol is particularly unhealthy during the growth phase

The average person's brain continues to develop until their 24th year. Alcohol disrupts that development and may affect your child's character and behaviour. Children who drink regularly face a greater risk of alcoholism in later life. During puberty, the growth of bones and muscles accelerates. Hormones influence these processes and alcohol disrupts the balance, also reducing quantities of male and growth hormones, for example. Alcohol consumption is known to curb bone development in boys.

– Impaired performance at school, study and work

After spending an evening drinking, a person's memory function is impaired.

This means that it becomes more difficult to concentrate. A young person's body takes longer to break down alcohol than an adult's does. This means that, after spending an evening drinking, they will still be under the influence the next morning. Like adults, young people need at least two days to recover after a weekend of heavy drinking.

– Greater risk of unsafe sex

When under the influence of alcohol, young people will more readily do things they would not do otherwise. After drinking, they are more likely to have unsafe sex.

Half of young people doubt whether they would be able to use a condom when under the influence of alcohol.

– Increase in accidents and aggression

As well as reducing a person's self control, alcohol also reduces their responsiveness. This increases the risk of accidents. Research has shown that young people who drink when they go out are more likely to be a victim or perpetrator of aggressive behaviour.

– Blackouts are common

A blackout can happen if an excessive amount of alcohol is consumed within a short time span. At the time of drinking everything seems fine, but the next day all recollection of it will be gone. Regular blackouts can cause permanent brain damage.

– Increased risk of alcohol poisoning

When they go out, young people often drink large amounts of alcohol very quickly, increasing the risk of alcohol poisoning. Alcohol poisoning causes the nervous system to shut down and leads to unconsciousness.

In the gravest of cases, it may even result in a coma or death.

More information

More information about alcohol abuse in young people can be found on the following websites:

www.alcoholinfo.nl

www.trimbos.nl

www.alcoholpagina.nl

www.stap.nl

www.alcoholpreventie.nl

ec.europa.eu/comm/health

www.ias.org.uk

www.watdrinkjij.nl

www.uwkindenalcohol.nl

www.polikliniekjeugdentalcohol.nl

Questions

A team of **childcare and domestic violence coordinators** work at Ikazia Hospital. You may be contacted by one of the coordinators in order to discuss any uncertainties. You can also request a meeting with the coordinator yourself if you have any questions.

In conclusion

Ikazia Hospital attaches great value to the safety and well-being of all patients. By complying with the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse (Reporting Code) Act of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport at Ikazia Hospital, we hope to detect any alarming situations at home or in the living environment and offer help in time, where necessary.

If you have any questions after reading this leaflet, you can contact the childcare and domestic violence coordinator.

You can do so from Monday to Friday by calling the general telephone number of Ikazia Hospital: **T** 010 297 50 00



Ikazia Ziekenhuis
Montessoriweg 1
3083 AN Rotterdam
www.ikazia.nl

Alcoholintoxicatie bij jongeren (Engels)
800481-EN / 2015-02