

ALCOPOPS

*Connecticut Clearinghouse, A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness
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Alcopops – Not Your Grandma’s Lemonade

Lemonade on Grandma's front porch during hot summer months is a blurry memory for a growing number of teens downing new alcoholic forms of the summertime treat. Lemonade joins a host of other sweet drinks including teas and colas that are being infused with alcohol to create the latest drinking trend—alcopops.

Also called clear malts, flavored malt beverages, malt alternatives, or RTDs (as in ready to drink), alcopops are sweet, sugary alternatives to bitter beers and wines. They combine the sweet taste of Kool-Aid with the kick of malt liquor to create a taste that is particularly appealing to teens. With cool colors and names to match—Twisted Tea, Doc Otis Hard Lemon, Mike's Hard Lemonade, Rick's Spiked Mandarin Lime, Smirnoff Ice, Skyy Blue, Captain Morgan Gold, Stolichnaya Citrona, and Bacardi Silver—alcopops are a soft entry to the hard world of alcohol. Teens and young adults who drink alcopops may turn to the malt beverage "big brothers"—Smirnoff, Captain Morgan, Stoli, and Bacardi—as adults.

For the alcohol industry, the classification of alcopops as beers—instead of liquor—opens the door to a host of advertising opportunities. For 54 years, the broadcast industry (unlike cable) has banned liquor advertisements, but beer faces no such exile. In fact, beer commercials are among the most widely anticipated and remembered advertisements during sports events such as the Superbowl. Because alcopops are technically beer, they can be hawked on the networks, allowing the liquor industry to place its logos, colors, and brand names in front of millions of viewers. Most alcopop television ads occur after 9 p.m. when many teens are tuned in, but a recent report from the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) found that alcopop ads also ran during pre-9 p.m. shows with a high teen audience including "Fear Factor," "Friends," and National Basketball Association games.

One of the ways you can combat these attractive ads is to use them as an opportunity to talk to your kids about alcopops. Capture a "teachable moment" by

asking your teen what she thinks of the ad, to whom she believes it might be directed, and what kind of effects the product might have on the person who drinks it. Combating alcopop ads is an important step for parents to take because research shows that the ads are sticking with teens. CSPI polled 750 teens, aged 12 to 18, and asked them to recall commercials they have seen for alcopops. According to the poll, 73% of the teens surveyed had seen television ads for alcoholic beverages. More specifically, 62% recalled ads for Smirnoff Ice, 40% recalled ads for Bacardi Silver, and 58% recalled ads for Mike's Hard Lemonade. Alcopop ad recollection translates into alcopop consumption—35% of teenagers aged 14 to 16 said they had tried alcopops. Among 17- and 18-year-olds, the figure increases to 51%.



As you talk about ads with your teen, beware of the popular argument that alcopops aren't as strong as other forms of alcohol. A 12-ounce alcopop, a 12-ounce mug of beer, a cocktail with 1.5 ounces of spirits, and a 5-ounce glass of wine contain the same amount of alcohol and can have the same dangerous effects. The only difference between alcopops and other forms of alcohol is the taste. Alcohol in any form can have serious effects including distorted vision, hearing, and coordination; altered perceptions and emotions; impaired judgment; bad breath; and hangovers.

Be on the lookout for these signs and keep in mind, alcopops might be classified as beer, but you won't find that stale beer smell in these new drinks.

Information Provided by CSAP Reality Check –
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