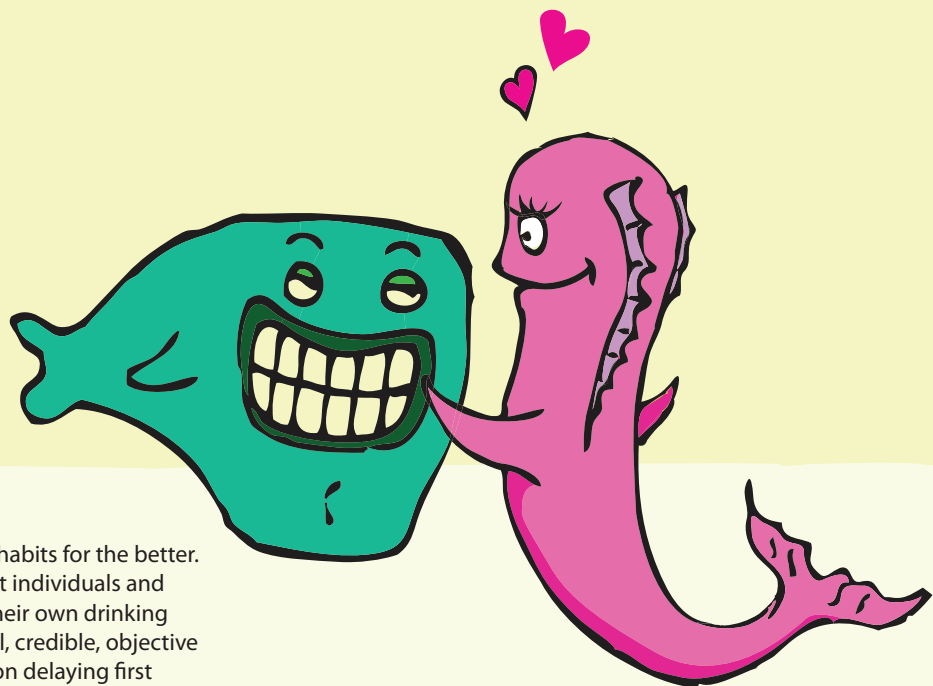


# Alcohol and Sexual Health

## Workshop notes



Drinkaware aims to change the UK's drinking habits for the better. We promote responsible drinking and support individuals and organisations who aim to positively change their own drinking habits or those of others. We provide impartial, credible, objective facts. Among young people, we aim to focus on delaying first alcohol use where possible, but we recognise some people will drink so we also concentrate on promoting harm minimisation.

### About this resource

Finding ways to talk to your class or youth group about alcohol and sex can be tough, but it's essential that young people learn the facts early on.

That's why Drinkaware has produced this easy-to-use workshop/lesson plan. Inside you'll find engaging activities designed to get 14-16 year olds at Key Stage 4 thinking about how alcohol can affect their sexual health.

The workshop involves discussion-based activities and group work designed to develop debating skills and role play. It can be run during a PSHE session, in tutor time, or as part of a youth group.

A dedicated factsheet with information and advice for young people designed to complement this session is available to download at [www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk). Hand out to your group during the lesson/workshop to provide hints on the activities, or after it ends to consolidate their understanding.

The workshop will last 1 hour and includes:

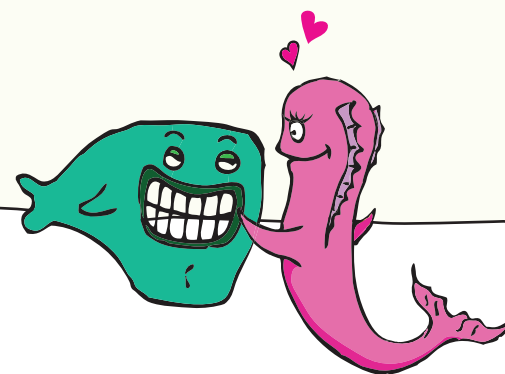
- An opening activity (10 minutes)
- 2 main activities (20 minutes each)
- A plenary (5-10 minutes).

Topics covered:

- 1) How alcohol affects your confidence and your judgement
- 2) Alcohol and losing your virginity
- 3) Alcohol and unwanted pregnancy
- 4) Alcohol and STIs.

You will need:

- A whiteboard, flipchart or large piece of paper
- Sheets of A4 or exercise books
- An empty wine bottle
- Pens or markers.

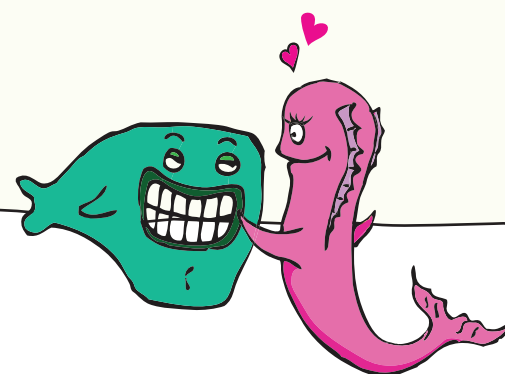


### Learning objectives

- To challenge the widely held belief that you have to drink a lot of alcohol to have fun
- To understand:
  - 1) How alcohol affects sexual behaviour
  - 2) The importance of using a condom
  - 3) The importance of drinking sensibly.

During the session young people might want to draw on their own experiences. To ensure that the session never gets too personal, and depending on your own rules, you might want to encourage students to speak about experiences in the third person.

**NOTE:** Background information, including further scientific facts about alcohol, can be found on the Drinkaware website at [www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)



### Condom consequences (5-10 minutes)

To start, ask the whole group to suggest the consequences of not wearing a condom.

Answers could include:

- Unwanted pregnancy
- The risk of catching/spreading a sexually transmitted infection.

Write the answers up on the whiteboard.

Next, divide the young people up into groups of 3 or 4. Ask each group to mind map ways in which alcohol could stop young people from wearing a condom. Give each group a sheet of A4 to write down suggestions.

Explain to the group that alcohol:

- Lowers inhibitions
- Affects judgement
- Affects motor skills.

These effects mean you may do things you wouldn't when sober – like having sex without a condom. Less able groups may need terms like 'inhibitions' and 'motor skills' defined.

After 5 minutes, ask each group to share their suggestions. Take time to briefly discuss each suggestion.

#### Examples may include:

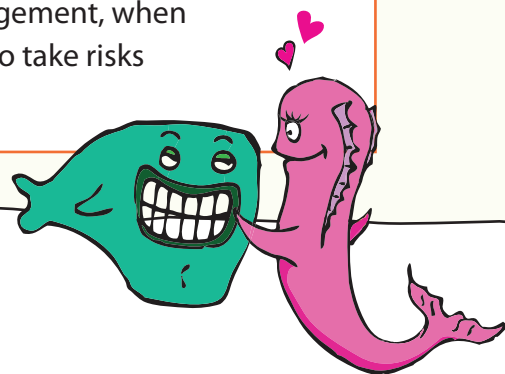
**Being too drunk to put on a condom:** Because alcohol affects motor skills it can be tough to open the foil and get the condom on in the first place. There's also the risk of tearing it with your fingernails or putting it on the wrong way round.

**Being forced into sex:** Because alcohol affects your judgement it can make you vulnerable. You might be too drunk to say 'no' to sex.

**Giving in to peer pressure:** Because alcohol affects your inhibitions, you may be more likely to give in if your partner suggests sex without a condom.

**Forgetting to take condoms out with you:** Because alcohol affects judgement, you might forget to put condoms in your bag/pocket – or accidentally leave them at home.

**Not caring if you use a condom:** Because alcohol affects judgement, when you're caught up in the moment it can make you more likely to take risks and so less likely to think about safe sex.



### Activity 1: Spin the bottle (20 minutes)

This activity uses a Spin the Bottle format to explore different outcomes involving alcohol and sex.

If using a bottle isn't appropriate, the group can simply take turns to read out the outcomes.

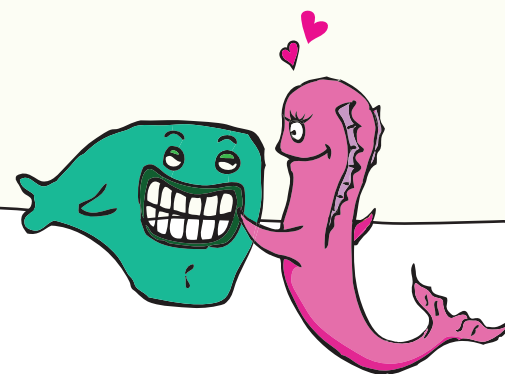
Ask the group to sit in a circle, and let each person take turns to spin the bottle.

Read out an outcome featured below and spin the bottle. Ask the person chosen by the bottle how they think drinking alcohol could affect the outcome. What are the possible consequences? How might they feel when the alcohol has worn off? Then, throw the question out to the rest of the group to discuss.

Carry on until all the outcomes have been discussed.

#### Outcomes

- 1) Asking someone out on a date
- 2) Losing your virginity
- 3) Protecting yourself against a sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- 4) Saying 'no' to sex
- 5) Staying in control of a sexual situation
- 6) Letting friends/your parents know where you are
- 7) Looking your best on a night out
- 8) Getting home safely from a date
- 9) Preventing an unwanted pregnancy
- 10) Sleeping with a person that you fancy.



### NOTES

#### 1) Asking someone out on a date.

Alcohol tends to make you temporarily lose your inhibitions and so can make you feel more confident, so it's easier to ask someone out. However, if you drink too much you could say or do something embarrassing that will blow your chances.

#### 2) Losing your virginity.

Many young people worry about their first time. Some people may drink to give themselves confidence – but being drunk can mean you pick the wrong person to share the experience with or don't remember it the next day. Alcohol can also make sex clumsy, and many young people later regret drinking before losing their virginity. Alcohol affects male performance too, so boys might have trouble getting or keeping an erection.

#### 3) Protecting yourself against an STI.

The best way to protect yourself against an STI is by using a condom. But, as we saw in the opening activity, alcohol can make you forget, or not even bother. If you have unprotected sex you should get a check-up at a Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinic. Many STIs don't have symptoms so you may not know you have one.

#### 4) Saying 'no' to sex.

Alcohol can make you say 'yes' to sex when you really mean 'no' because it affects your judgement and lowers inhibitions. This can be embarrassing if you wake up next to someone you don't fancy, or even dangerous if you go home with someone you don't know.

#### 5) Staying in control of a sexual situation.

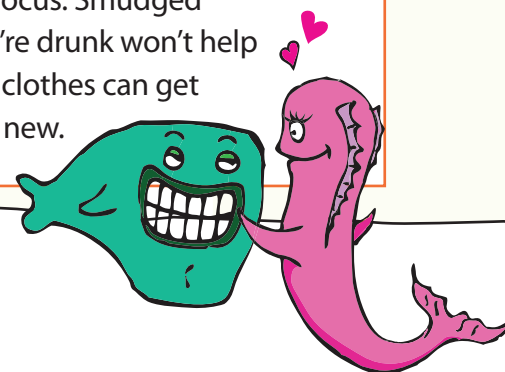
When you're getting intimate with someone you have the right to decide how far you want to go, and where to draw the line. Alcohol can make you cross a line you wouldn't when sober.

#### 6) Letting friends/your parents know where you are.

To stay safe it's important that your parents, or at least your friends, know where you are and what you're doing. Then, they can come quickly if you need any help. Alcohol can make you more likely to go 'off radar' with people that you don't know and can't trust.

#### 7) Looking your best on a night out.

Drinking alcohol makes your face go red and your eyes lose focus. Smudged make-up, messed up hair or staggering around because you're drunk won't help you look good, or attract someone you fancy! Your favourite clothes can get ripped and you might even throw up over something brand new.



### NOTES

#### 8) Getting home safely from a date.

Alcohol can make you vulnerable, which is why it's always best to plan your way home from a date in advance. Never accept a lift from a date who has been drinking, or get into an unlicensed minicab. Always let someone know where you are and who you are with.

#### 9) Preventing an unwanted pregnancy.

As we saw in the opening exercise, the best way to protect against unwanted pregnancy is by first making the right decision about who to have sex with and then using a condom. You're less likely to do so if you've been drinking. The consequences of an unwanted pregnancy can be extremely complicated. If you have had unprotected sex then you can take the 'morning after pill' (emergency hormonal contraception) up to 72 hours after, but the sooner the better. You can get it free from sexual health or family planning clinics, and from some pharmacists.

#### 10) Sleeping with a person that you fancy.

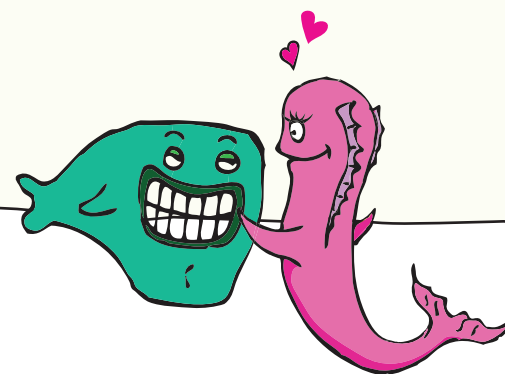
The 'beer goggles' effect means that alcohol can make people you don't fancy suddenly look attractive. Unfortunately, it won't last through to the morning, when you could find yourself in a sticky situation. Alcohol is a depressant, so you could feel even worse the next day if you do something you regret.

### Alternative ways to approach this activity

Divide the class/workshop into groups of 4. Give each group 3 outcomes. Ask the groups to think about and discuss how alcohol could affect the situations outlined on the cards. Ask each group to list the consequences on a piece of A3. Discuss with the whole group.

Go through 3 or 4 outcomes with the whole group, as above. Divide the class/workshop into smaller groups and ask them to role play a situation illustrating the outcome on the card. Then ask them to run a role play of the outcome. Run each role play for the rest of the group.

The group can then add their suggestions.



### Activity 2: Soap opera (20 minutes)

Divide the group into smaller groups of 3 or 4. Ask each group to pick out 1 of the scenarios above, or choose 1 of their own.

Explain that they are planning the next episode of a soap opera featuring an issue surrounding alcohol and sexual health as the climax to the show.

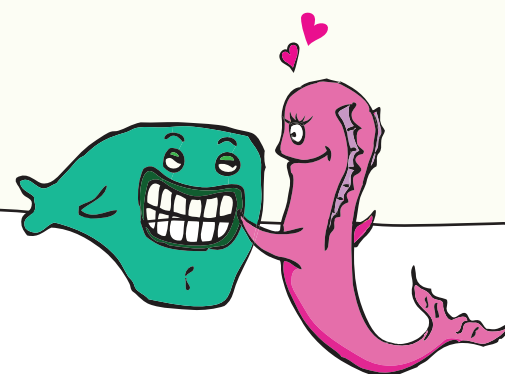
Ask each group to draw a series of 6 boxes on a piece of A4 as a storyboard. In each box the group should illustrate what's happening at a key point in the scene. To accompany the storyboard the groups should also start writing a script. Model the format on the board if necessary.

After 15 minutes have elapsed, ask 2 groups to read their script out to the rest of the class/workshop. Ask them to explain their decisions. For instance, why did they pick certain characters? Ask the whole group what they think will happen next.

#### Alternative ways to approach this activity

As above, ask each group to produce a storyboard/script. Then, ask each group to get up in front of the class and act out their scene.

After creating a storyboard ask each group to design a print poster designed to run in newspapers and magazines to promote the storyline. For homework (or another session), ask the group to research websites that could offer help with the issues touched on in the show. Examples could include [www.thesite.org](http://www.thesite.org) and [www.ruthinking.co.uk](http://www.ruthinking.co.uk)



### Plenary (5-10 minutes)

Ask each young person to write a text message summarising 3 of the things they've learnt from the session.

Ask the young people to share their messages with the rest of the class.

Explain to the group that the best ways to stay safer when drinking are:

**Know your limits** Find out the alcohol content of your favourite drinks and work out your sensible limits.

**Drink smarter** If you choose to drink alcohol, make sure you make room for soft drinks too. This will keep you hydrated and help you avoid drinking too much alcohol.

**Eating before and during drinking** Eating snacks between drinks, or having a meal before you go out, will help slow down the absorption of alcohol to stop you feeling out of control.

**Looking out for friends** Make sure your friends stay safe and they'll do the same for you.

**Using a condom** If you're going to have sex, then make sure you carry a condom. They are the best way to protect against sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies.

To let your group know about organisations that can give further information about sexual health, hand out the Drinkaware 'Alcohol and Unprotected Sex' worksheet. You can download it at [www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk).

**Visit [www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk) for more workshop plans, factsheets and other useful tips, tools, publications and resources about alcohol.**

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