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For Immediate Release

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## **Use Science to Convince Teens a Sober Prom is Better, AAAS Says**

**Washington, D.C.** This is the time of year when even teens who have never tried a drop of alcohol may be tempted. Middle and high school proms and graduation are big events and there will be multiple parties to attend and a wide array of opportunities for alcohol to be served.

Assume that your child will be tempted to drink alcohol at the end of the school year, advises the Science Inside Alcohol Project of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). So start talking to your child about alcohol right now. Instead of just asking your teen not to drink, the Science Inside Alcohol Project suggests explaining how alcohol can affect his or her body. Here are five ways alcohol can ruin prom night or graduation:

1. **They May Not Remember** - Teens spend months preparing for prom and graduation and cherish those memories throughout their lives. But if they drink, there's a good chance they may not remember any of it. The hippocampus, or the area in the brain that stores memory, is still maturing in teens. Drinking even small amounts of alcohol can make kids forget what they did while drinking and even black-out completely.
2. **They May Do Things They Don't Want to Do** – Alcohol helps release inhibitions, and teens who drink may indulge in risky behaviors such as unprotected sex or drunk driving. The brain's prefrontal cortex, which is involved in planning and decision-making, does not completely mature until a person's mid-to-late twenties. Using alcohol can harm a teen's ability to reason and weigh options instead of just doing something because it is fun or feels good.
3. **They May Get Into Fights** – Research shows that teens who drink are often more violent than those who do not. For example, 7th graders who drank averaged almost twice as many violent behaviors as those who didn't, according to a recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A report from Ormond Street Hospital in London says that almost a fifth of 12-13 year olds and more than a quarter of 14-15 year olds reported damaging or destroying things after drinking.
4. **They May Get Really Sick** – Who wants to spend prom night throwing up or so dizzy that he or she can't dance? *Alcohol* can irritate the stomach causing dehydration which often leads to *vomiting and dizziness*. Throwing up also may be a sign of alcohol poisoning, which causes body systems to break down and requires immediate medical care. That's a good way to ruin everyone's night.

5. **They May Feel Horrible for the Next Couple of Days** – Even small amounts of alcohol can cause a hangover which can lead to thirst, dizziness and lightheadedness. Headaches caused by blood vessel expansion and sleepiness due to narcotic effects on the central nervous system are other symptoms of a hangover. Your teen may have to forgo events scheduled for the next day or two while trying to get better.

"A time of year that's supposed to be fun for parents and kids can turn ugly quickly. Alcohol-free means a lot less drama," says Shirley Malcom, head of the Education & Human Resources Directorate at AAAS.

The Science Inside Alcohol Project of AAAS is developing a series of lessons for middle school students, an electronic and print book for parents and other products to teach the science of alcohol. This project, which is part of AAAS' highly regarded Science Inside series, is funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). For more information go to <http://www.aaas.org>, or find us on Facebook and become a fan <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Science-Inside-Alcohol/33451484521>. The nonprofit AAAS is the world's largest general science society.

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