



Alcohol & Smoking

As part of IRFU's commitment to protection the health and well-being of Age-Grade Players and to ensuring Age-Grade Players thrive within a safe and fun environment, IRFU request that branches and clubs (including schools), Coaches, Volunteers and Age-Grade Players:

- a) Must not promote, condone or use sports supplements contrary to the IRFU Guidelines and Recommendations, "Sports Supplements and Young Rugby Players"
- b) Must participate in the education of themselves and others about the detrimental effects of using substances taken to enhance performances

Alcohol

Alcohol and alcohol advertising is part of everyday life. Young people are not only influenced by trends and peer pressures but are also exposed to constant alcohol advertising. These advertisements seek to make the consumption of alcohol acceptable and trendy and therefore making the awareness of the pitfalls of alcohol consumption more difficult. Sports Leaders should ensure Age-Grade Players are aware of the dangers of alcohol abuse.

Reasons why alcohol is to be discouraged:

- Alcohol promotes fluid loss i.e. it has a diuretic effect on the body. Maintaining a state of hydration is important in order to function at one's best
- Alcohol consumption reduces the body's ability to replenish glycogen following training and playing and so has a negative impact on fuel recovery
- Alcohol has a vasodilatory effect on the body i.e. it keeps the blood vessels open. A bruised and injured body needs to be managed immediately. Proper management especially in the first 48 hours of incurring the injury is critical to the speedy return of the Age-Grade Player to training and playing.
- Alcohol intake is likely to facilitate increased bleeding and swelling and so it is to be avoided especially when the Age-Grade Player is recovering following a game or when he is injured
- Alcohol consumption can affect reaction, balance and co-ordination
- Alcohol consumption generally occurs at night time. All players require sleep. It is during sleep that the body repairs damaged tissue. It is important not to deprive the body of this important sleep requirement

Smoking

- Smoking should be avoided by the Age-Grade Player. Smoking is a serious health risk. It should play no part in a player's lifestyle
- Clubs must enforce statutory requirements in relation to smoking on the premises

Teach Young People

- What the law is regarding under-age drinking
- Not to travel in a car with any one who has taken any alcohol
- Not to participate in "drinking games"
- To be able to say "No" and refuse a drink
- The implications to health when consuming alcohol
- To be able to put a drink down if they don't want it
- There is no quick way to sober up
- Drinking influences judgement
- Under-age drinking is against the Law

Adults

- Adults have a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that young players don't get involved in under age drinking
- Clubs must not supply alcohol to persons under 18 yrs of age, nor permit any person under 18 yrs of age to consume alcohol on rugby club premises
- All Clubs should have a clear written policy, visible to all visitors to the club, regarding the use of alcohol and under-age individuals

Considerations for Clubs

- Establish a written policy regarding alcohol and the Age-Grade players in the club
- Ensure Age-Grade players know when they are allowed or not allowed in the bar areas of the club
- Limit the opportunities where Age-Grade players could be exposed to alcohol
- Support IRFU and Government policy on under-age drinking
- Support all programmes in the community to prevent under-age drinking
- Be aware of legislation regarding the use of alcohol and young people
- Find out about the availability of alcohol to under-age players in the community
- Educate players about the dangers of alcohol use, addiction and abuse

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IRFU

For information on supplementation, please see Irish Rugby's nutrition page [here](#).

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