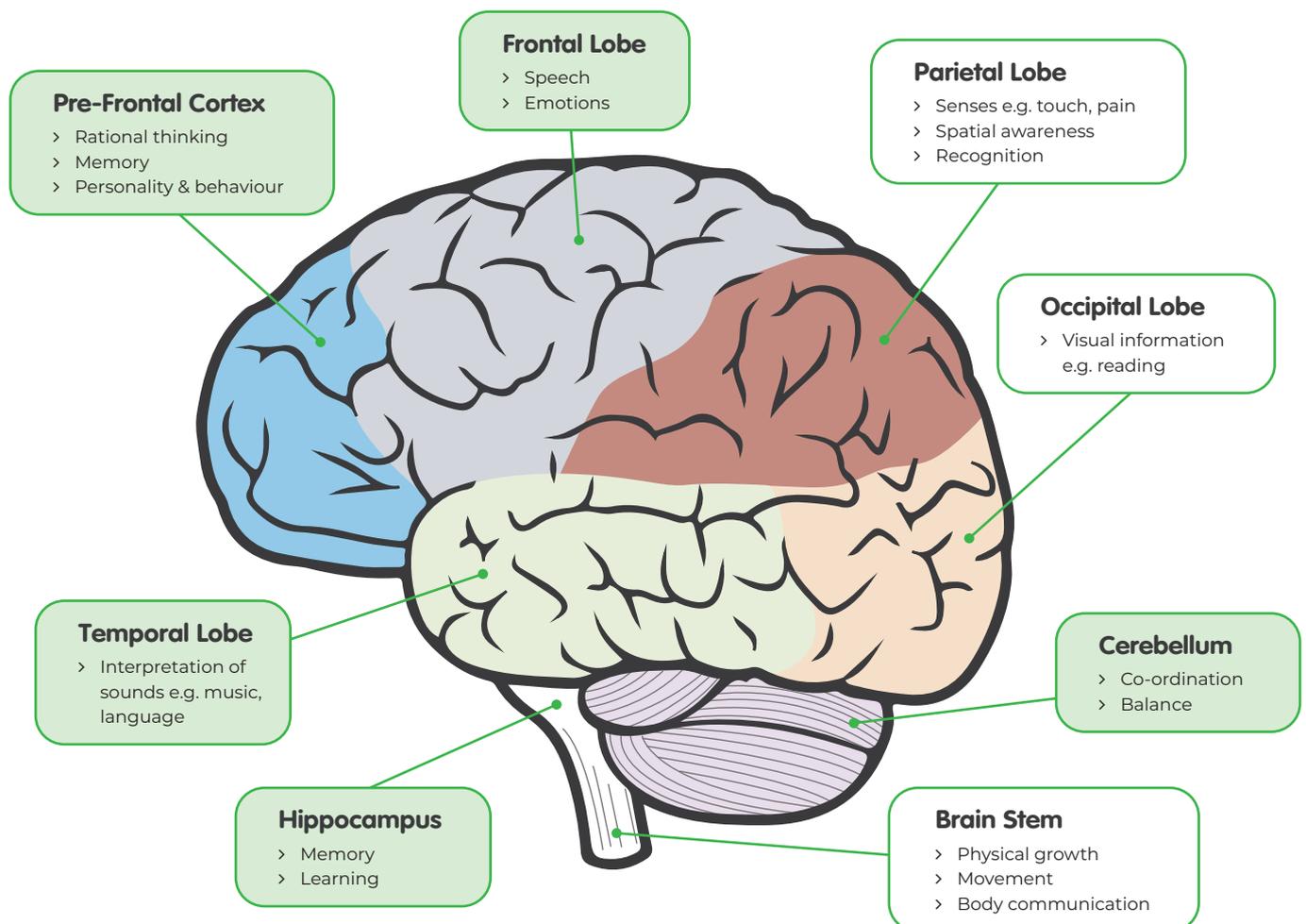


ALCOHOL AND ADOLESCENT BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Did you know?

Drinking in adolescence can be harmful to a young person's physical development, particularly brain development. It is a critical period in a young person's development towards adulthood and what they learn during their teenage years sets the young person's path for later in life. Alcohol consumption during adolescence can bring about learning difficulties, memory and social problems.

Areas of the brain and functions affected by alcohol (in green):



- > Adolescent brains are more sensitive to alcohol.
- > Alcohol can affect brain development in the areas which play an important role in learning capabilities, memory function and verbal skills.
- > Adolescent drinking inhibits the growth of neurons and decreases the process of myelination (transmitting electrical signals), causing up to a 10% reduction in the size of the hippocampus.

Key Fact

People who first drink alcohol before age 15 are five times more likely to drink more alcohol than those who first used at age 18 or older.

Risks

Drinking alcohol in adolescence can cause permanent irreparable damage with memory loss, inability to learn, problems with verbal skills, alcohol dependence and depression.

Those who are 18 years and under should avoid alcohol.

Social

Alcohol can affect an adolescent's social development if they start drinking at an early age.

Alcohol use in adolescence also increases the risk of depression, suicidal thoughts and violence, as well as they are most likely to be a victim of a crime themselves.

Additionally, it may turn into a form of coping and leaving them more open to using other substances.



Full Brain Development

Different parts of the brain develop at different rates as we grow. Rational thinking in the pre-frontal cortex does not fully develop until

21 years old
females

28 years old
males

Alcohol use during its development can have life-long consequences for a young person's memory, personality and behaviour.

Tips

As a parent what can you do?

There is no evidence to support the view that parental supply of alcohol protects children, in fact it is the opposite and parental supply is seen as a permissive culture for alcohol use.

Take action by:

- › Getting to know the parents of your children's friends.
- › Gather with other parents to discuss the idea of working together and agreeing on.
- › Making a commitment to not allowing teenage children to drink alcohol. Anywhere.
- › Be a collective voice for communicating about the importance of not allowing your children or your children's friends to drink alcohol. Anywhere. Anytime.

True or False?

Q. Introducing alcohol in the home with a meal will promote responsible drinking.

A. *False, there is no evidence that parental supply protects children from adverse drinking outcomes.*

Q. Adolescent's brains are still developing and alcohol could damage their development.

A. *True, alcohol can inhibit the growth of neurons and diminish their potential.*

Q. Talking about alcohol with my teen will make my teenager want to drink.

A. *False, explaining the risks and harms associated with alcohol will educate them and open the lines of communication.*

Q. Increased risk-taking behavior is part of adolescence, if it feels good they'll do it.

A. *True, the brain hasn't developed fully to analyse the risks & consequences.*

