

developing during adolescence, there has been concern that it may be more vulnerable to high doses of alcohol.” Many questions still remain, including how long it takes before these changes occur, and how much they affect the function of the brain. To figure this out, scientists would have to look at the binge drinkers’ brains before and after they started drinking. That way, they can tell if the differences might have already been there before the teens started drinking. It’s possible that having abnormal white matter in the brain somehow increases the chance of being a binge drinker. In order to answer that question, Dr. Tapert says they need to do longer studies that follow teens’ brain growth over time.

The bottom line? If you’re a teen, drinking to the point of getting drunk could damage the white matter of your brain. Even if you do it only once in a while.

Find out more through the following resources:

- SAMHSA Fact Sheet on Binge Drinking
- NIH Fact Sheet on Underage Drinking (PDF, 305 KB)
- USCD News Release: Binge Drinking May Hamper Information Relay System in Teen Brain
- Dr. Tapert’s Study: Altered White Matter Integrity in Adolescent Binge Drinkers
- NIAAA’s Rethinking Drinking