



USE YOUR HEAD GET THE FACTS ABOUT ALCOHOL & THE TEENAGE BRAIN



Underage drinking is a serious problem in North Carolina.

Many people don't realize the huge impact that drinking can have on a child's still-growing brain.
Learn more at TalkItOutNC.org.

START THE CONVERSATION.



STOP UNDERAGE DRINKING.

SOURCES:

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Alcohol affects the adolescent brain differently than it affects the adult brain—because the human brain isn't fully developed until a person reaches their mid-20s.

THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL ON THE TEENAGE BRAIN



Judgment

The prefrontal cortex—often called the control center of the brain—is responsible for judgment, behavior and impulse control. Even low levels of alcohol have a negative impact on planning, organizing, managing time and paying attention.¹



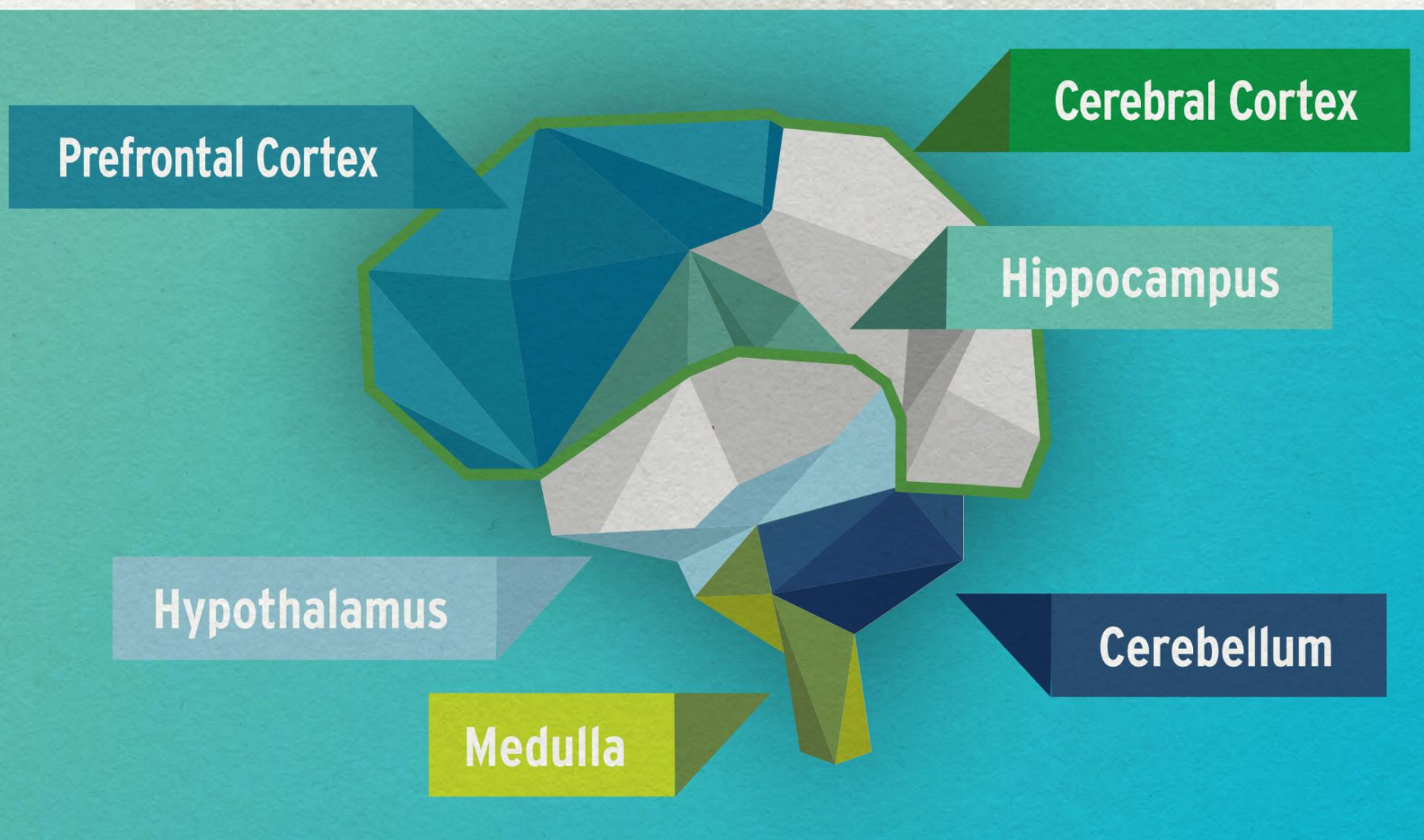
Memory

The hippocampus is key for memory and learning. Alcohol can block an important receptor responsible for processing and storing memories—an effect that's more pronounced in adolescents than in adults with fully developed brains.²



Consciousness

The cerebral cortex is where higher brain functions (language, memory, consciousness) occur. Teen brains can be less reactive than adult brains to signals that it's time to stop drinking, and more susceptible to dangerous behaviors like binge drinking.³



Impulse Control

The hypothalamus releases hormones as a way to manage emotions and impulses. Alcohol suppresses normal hormonal responses to stress in adolescents; heavy drinking may lead to life-long changes in how this system responds to stress.⁴



Breathing

The medulla controls vital functions such as breathing and the beating of the heart. When a person has been drinking heavily, it's possible for these functions to slow down or even stop completely.⁵



Coordination

The cerebellum controls balance and muscle coordination. Drinking alcohol inhibits motor function and slows reaction time—which is why it's so difficult and dangerous to drive after drinking.⁶

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