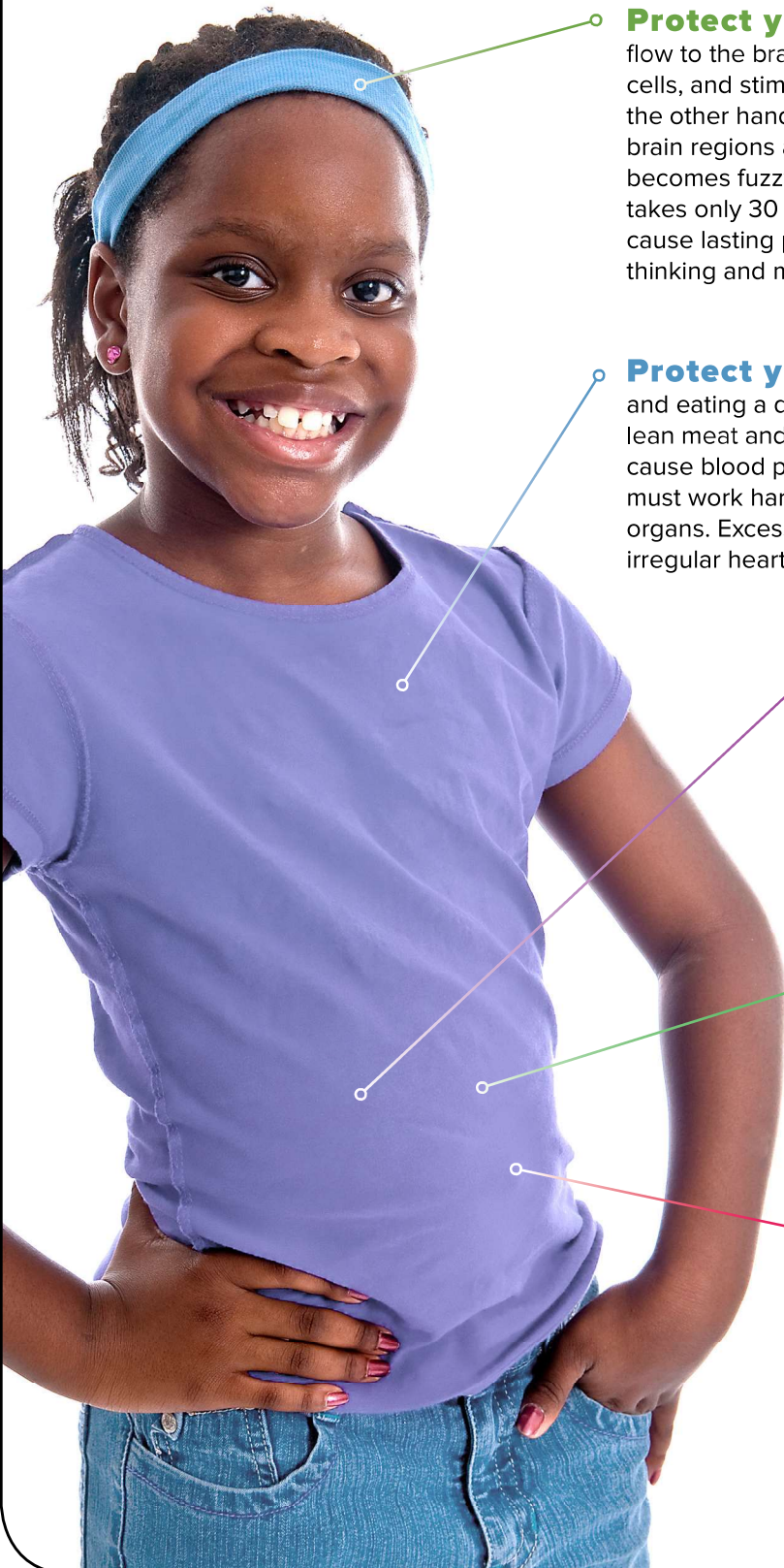


# Protect Your Body

Think drinking will make you feel good? Think again. Alcohol can affect the body from head to toe—and not in a good way. Protect your body, stay away from alcohol because it can have bad affects on your growing body.



**Protect your brain** with exercise, which boosts blood flow to the brain, helps strengthen connections between brain cells, and stimulates the growth of new brain cells. Alcohol, on the other hand, slows down the electrical impulses between brain regions and can cause brain cells to shrink. Thinking becomes fuzzy, and coordination and judgment are impaired. It takes only 30 seconds for alcohol to reach the brain, but it can cause lasting problems, permanently harming young people's thinking and memory.

**Protect your heart** by getting regular physical activity and eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lean meat and fish. Alcohol should be avoided because it can cause blood pressure to rise slightly, which means the heart must work harder to pump oxygen-rich blood to the body's organs. Excessive drinking can lead to serious problems such as irregular heartbeat, heart attacks, and strokes.

**Protect your liver** by staying away from alcohol. The liver's job is to filter the blood and break down toxins, but the liver can only process a small amount of toxins at a time. Alcohol can introduce toxins to your body. Because your liver works to filter alcohol out of your body, underage drinking can cause permanent liver damage.

**Protect your stomach** by eating whole foods such as fruits, whole grains, and yogurt (which is full of healthy bacteria your stomach needs). Steer clear of alcohol. Drinking alcohol can irritate the stomach, causing nausea or vomiting.

**Protect your immune system** by eating foods high in beta-carotene, vitamin C, and vitamin E, and by getting enough sleep. Drinking alcohol can suppress your immune system, which is the body's defense system against disease. When your immune system is compromised you are more likely to get sick and it's harder to fight off existing illnesses.