



For Parents: Talk To Your Children About Alcohol

TAKE ACTION

There are six actions you can take today to help keep your child alcohol free.

1. TALK EARLY AND OFTEN WITH YOUR CHILD

- Establish and maintain an open line of communication.
- Get into the habit of talking with your child every day. This will make it easier for you to have conversations about serious subjects when necessary.

2. GET INVOLVED

- Talking with your child about his or her activities opens up an opportunity for you to share your interests and values.
- Young people are much less likely to have mental health and substance abuse problems when they have positive activities to do and when caring adults are involved in their lives.

3. BE A ROLE MODEL

- Think about what you say and how you act in front of your child. Your own actions are the most powerful indicator to your children of what is appropriate and acceptable in your family.
- Do not take part in illegal, unhealthy, or dangerous practices related to alcohol, tobacco, or drugs or your child may believe that these practices are OK no matter what you say.

4. TEACH KIDS TO CHOOSE FRIENDS WISELY

- Teach your child how to form positive relationships.
- Help your child to understand what qualities to look for in a friend.

5. MONITOR YOUR CHILD'S ACTIVITIES

- Know where your children are and get acquainted with their friends.
- Limit the amount of time your children spend without an adult being present. Unsupervised children have more opportunities to experiment with risky behaviors, including the use of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs, and they may start substance abuse at earlier ages.

6. SET RULES

- Make clear, sensible rules for your child and enforce them with consistency and appropriate consequences.
- Following these rules can help protect your child's physical safety and mental well-being, which can lower his or her risk for substance abuse problems.

***Be aware of what is going on in your home.
Two out of three teens aged 13-18 said it is easy to get alcohol from
their own homes without their parents knowing it.****

SET CLEAR RULES ABOUT ALCOHOL

BE SPECIFIC

- ✓ Tell your children what the law is, what your household rules are, and what behavior you expect. For example, "Alcohol is for adults. Do not drink alcohol until you are 21. Our family follows the law."

BE CONSISTENT

- ✓ Be sure your children understand that the rules are maintained at all times, and that the rules hold true even at other people's houses. Follow your own rules.

BE REASONABLE

- ✓ Don't change the rules in mid-stream or add new consequences without talking to your children. Avoid unrealistic threats.

RECOGNIZE GOOD BEHAVIOR

- ✓ Always let your children know how pleased you are when they respect the rules of the household.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- ✓ Write out your most important family rules and post them clearly where they are seen often by everyone in the family. Then review the rules regularly with your family on your children's birthdays or at the beginning of the school year.

* Source: AMA Teen Sources of Alcohol Poll Release, August 2005

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
The Family Guide: Keeping Youth Mentally Healthy and Drug-Free
<http://family.samhsa.gov/stop/talk.aspx>