

TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

HOW TO PREPARE

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Choose an informal setting.

It doesn't work well to have a "family meeting where we're going to talk about drugs." Kids don't respond well to that. Instead, try to bring up the subject when your kids are relaxed and you're just enjoying each other's company, such as in the car or when you're shopping or exercising together.

Don't have just one conversation.

Many short talks are better than one long one. Keep talking about drugs and alcohol as your kids get older.

Clearly state what you expect.

Don't be vague. Your kids should know exactly what the family rules are and what the consequences will be if those rules are broken. They should also understand why you're making those rules.

Support. Don't accuse.

Your kids should come away from these conversations feeling like you're always there for them, not that you suspect them of doing something wrong.

Don't lie.

If your kids ask if you drank or tried drugs when you were their age, and you did—be honest. Acknowledge it was risky and emphasize that more is known about drinking and drugs now than back then. Most importantly, don't let your past hold you back from talking to your kids. Being a good role model doesn't mean you have to have a perfect past.

Set a good example.

If you're currently doing the things you tell your kids not to do, they won't put much weight in what you say. If you need help, don't try to hide it. Get the assistance you need.

Learn more at WorthTheEffort.org



TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT

ALCOHOL

A TIP SHEET FOR PARENTS



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Think before you speak

Having conversations with your kids about alcohol is worth the effort. But it's good to prepare. Consider beforehand how you'll bring up the topic and what you'll say. The information below can help you.

The Basics

- A standard "drink" in the U.S. contains 14 grams of pure alcohol. That equates to about 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of liquor/spirits. Of course, it depends on the alcohol content in each.¹
- Binge drinking involves drinking to the point where the blood alcohol concentration is 0.08 g/dl or above. While a person's weight and the time elapsed play a big role, age and gender also affect how much alcohol it takes to get to that point. The numbers below show how many drinks it takes to be considered "binge drinking." A person can be drunk—and impaired—well before this point.¹

Boys

Ages 9-13: about 3 drinks

Ages 14-15: about 4 drinks

Ages 16-17: about 5 drinks

Girls

Ages 9-17: about 3 drinks

The Facts

- Alcohol is the most widely abused substance by American youth.² It beats out cigarettes, marijuana and vaping.
- People aged 12-20 years old drink 11% of alcohol consumed in the U.S.²
- More than 90% of this underage drinking is consumed in the form of bingeing.²
- Excessive drinking is responsible for more than 4,300 deaths among underage youth each year.²

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THE QUESTIONS

& THE ANSWERS



These are some common questions teens might ask about the subject and ideas for how to respond. Your kids want you to be genuine. So don't memorize the answers—just talk to them heart-to-heart. Remember, too, your teens may ask different questions. Think about your kids' own personalities and what they may wonder, and then use that to guide your conversation.

“If it's so dangerous, why do you drink?”

Because I'm an adult, I can make that choice. One of the dangers of drinking has to do with brain development. When you're young, alcohol can have long-lasting intellectual effects. And, drinking young can make you four times more likely to be dependent on alcohol later in life. As an adult, those issues are much less. Plus, I drink in moderation, and not to get drunk.

“What if I promise not to drink and drive?”

Unfortunately, when you're drunk you aren't always thinking straight. So even if that's what you intend to do, it may not be what you'd actually end up doing. I'd feel a lot better just knowing you weren't drinking.

“What if I have no other way to get home because the driver has been drinking?”

Call me. I'll come and get you. Or I'll get you an Uber or a Lyft. I just don't want you to ever get behind the wheel if you've been drinking or in the car with someone who has been.

“What if my friends just came over to our house to drink? That way, you can supervise us.”

No, your friends aren't welcome to drink in our house. In Indiana, it's illegal for anyone under 21 to drink on private property, even if it's my kids in my home. I could be arrested for it.³

¹<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/underage-drinking>

²<https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm>

³<https://sccese.org/get-educated/indianas-underage-drinking-laws-and-consequences>

