

Tips for Talking with your Teen

The best way to help your child avoid drinking and other risky behaviors is to have a strong, trusting relationship with him or her. Research shows that teens are much more likely to delay drinking when they feel they have a close, supportive tie with a parent or guardian.

- **Encourage conversation.** Listen to what your child has to say.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** Encourage your teen to tell you how he or she thinks and feels about issues you are discussing.
- **Control your emotions.** If you hear something you don't like, try not to respond with anger. Instead, take a few deep breaths and acknowledge your feelings in a constructive way.
- **Make every conversation a “win-win” experience.** Don't lecture. If you show respect for your child's viewpoint, he or she will be more likely to listen to and respect yours.

TAKING ACTION: Prevention Strategies for Parents

- 1. Talk with your child about the dangers of alcohol use.** Start talking with your child when they are in early elementary school. Only about half of the parents in this community are talking with their children about the dangers of alcohol use. When you talk to your child, listen to and respect what they have to say, but then make it clear that you do not approve of underage drinking.
- 2. Set family rules.** Rules such as no alcohol until age 21, older siblings will not encourage drinking or provide alcohol to younger siblings, teens will not stay at parties where alcohol is being used and no driving or riding with a friend who has been drinking.
- 3. Teach your teen how to resist alcohol.** Create a list of reasons your teen can use to resist alcohol. The list can include potential punishments, such as grounding, loss of car and school activity/sports-policy violations, or more personal reasons such as “I choose not to,” “My parents trust me,” or “I'm on a medication that counteracts with alcohol.”
- 4. Monitor alcohol use in your home.** If you keep alcohol in your home, keep an eye on the supply or lock it up. If you host celebrations that include or honor youth, make the event alcohol-free.
- 5. Know your child's activities and plans.** Aim for regular phone calls and checking-in if your child goes to a different location.
- 6. Connect with other parents.** Rely on each other to keep tabs on your teens' activities.

Good Reasons Teens Should Not Drink

- **YOU want your child to avoid alcohol.** Your values and attitudes count with your child, even though he or she may not always show it.
- **To maintain self-respect.** Teens say the best way to persuade them to avoid alcohol is to appeal to their self-respect – let them know that they are too smart and have too much going for them to need the crutch of alcohol. And alcohol might lead to embarrassing situations or events – things that might damage their self-respect or alter important relationships.
- **Drinking is illegal.** Getting caught may lead to trouble with the authorities and the parents of your child's friends may no longer permit them to associate with your child.
- **Drinking can be dangerous.** One of the leading causes of teen deaths is motor vehicle crashes involving alcohol. Drinking also makes a young person more vulnerable to sexual assault and unprotected sex. And while your teen may believe he or she wouldn't engage in hazardous activities after drinking, point out that because alcohol impairs judgment, a drinker is very likely to think such activities won't be dangerous.
- **You have a family history of alcoholism.** If one or more members of your family has suffered from alcoholism, your child may be somewhat more vulnerable to developing a drinking problem.
- **Alcohol affects young people differently than adults.** The human brain is not fully developed until age 25 or 26. Drinking while the brain is still maturing may lead to long-lasting intellectual effects and may even increase the likelihood of developing alcohol dependence later in life.

If you think your child may have a problem with alcohol, seek professional help. Contact your child's school chemical health specialist or your health care provider for more information.

You are needed! Underage drinking is a serious problem that requires a community response. Partnership for Change is a coalition comprised of concerned community members including parents, law enforcement, faith communities, school staff, youth and others, have come together to address this issue.



If you are interested in learning more about this initiative, call (763) 581-3762 or go to partnership4change.org. Partnership for Change is located within North Memorial's Injury Prevention Department.