

TEN TIPS FOR PREVENTION FOR PARENTS

Recent scientific research has found that the longer an individual postpones the onset (first use) of alcohol, tobacco or other drug use, the less likely the individual is to develop an addiction or other substance use problem later in life.

And believe it or not, **parents are the most powerful influence on their kids** when it comes to alcohol and drugs. Recent research has found that 2 out of 3 kids ages 13-17 say that losing their parents' respect is one of the main reasons they don't drink alcohol, smoke marijuana or use other drugs.

So, as a parent, what can you do to influence or encourage a healthy attitude about alcohol and drug use?

Here are Ten Tips for Parents:

1) **Don't Be Afraid to be the "Bad" Parent:** Sometimes, our fear of negative reaction from our kids keeps us from doing what is right. When it comes to alcohol and drugs, taking a tough stand can help our children to say no. Our decisions and our rules can allow our child to use us as "the reason" for not using alcohol or drugs. ("My mom or my dad would kill me if I drank or used.")

2) **Connect With Your Child's Friends:** Pay attention to who your child is hanging out with, who's coming to the house and get to know them. Encourage your child to invite friends over to the house and make them feel welcomed.

3) **Make Connections With Other Parents Too:** As you get to know your kid's friends, take the opportunity to introduce yourself to his/her parents. It's a great way to build mutual support and share your rules about alcohol and drugs. And, it will make it easier for you to call if your son/daughter is going to a party at their house to make sure that there will be responsible parental supervision.

4) **Promote Healthy Activities:** Help your kids, and their friends, learn how to have fun, and fight off the dreaded "I'm bored." Physical games, activities and exercise are extremely important because of the positive physical and mental benefits. Encourage kids to become engaged in other school and community activities such as music, sports, arts or a part-time job. The more your children are active, the less time they have to get caught up in the pressure from peers to drink alcohol and use drugs.

5) **Establish Clear Family Rules About Alcohol and Drugs:** Setting specific, clear rules is the foundation for parental efforts in prevention, some ideas:

- Kids under 21 will not drink alcohol
- Kids will not ride in a car with someone who has been drinking or using drugs
- Older brothers and sisters will not encourage younger kids to drink or use drugs
- Kids under 21 will not host parties at our home without parental supervision
- Kids will not stay at a kid's party where alcohol or drugs are present.

Consistent enforcement of the rules, with consequences, if needed is essential. Without consequences the rules have no value and will not work.

6) **Get Educated About Alcohol and Drugs:** You cannot rely on your own personal experiences or common sense to carry you through. Your ability to provide family leadership in prevention requires you to be better educated. And, as you learn, share what you are learning with your spouse and your kids.

7) **Be a Role Model and Set a Positive Example:** Bottom line, from a kid's perspective, what you do is more important than what you say! Research studies show that parents who drink alcohol or use drugs are more likely to have kids who drink or use. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation; if you use medication, use only as directed, and do not use illegal drugs. If you host a party, always serve alternative non-alcoholic beverages and do not let anyone drink and drive.



8) **Keep Track of Your Child's Activities:** Asking questions, keeping track, checking in are all important. Research has found that young people who are not regularly monitored by their parents are four times more likely to use alcohol or drugs. Make the time to know what is happening in your child's life – especially in families where both parents work outside of the home, life is busy but you must find time for your children – know what they are up to!

9) **Keep Track of Alcohol and Prescription Drugs:** For kids, the most common source of alcohol and prescription drugs is parents. Make sure that your home is not a source of alcohol or prescription drugs for your kids or their friends.

10) **Get Help:** If at any point you suspect that your child is having a problem with alcohol and/or drugs, get help. Don't wait. Start with the Student Assistance Counselor at your teen's school!

Parenting IS Prevention!