

Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Kids

Research shows that the main reason that kids don't use alcohol, tobacco, or drugs is because of their parents—because of their positive influence and because they know it would disappoint them.

How Can Parents Help?

1. Be a good role model. Modeling positive healthy habits, such as eating properly and getting regular exercise. Actions speak louder than words. Research shows that parents who drink alcohol or use drugs are more likely to have kids who drink or use.
2. Make sure there is family time, such as eating dinner together. Research has shown that those who regularly sit down at the dinner table, and eat a meal together, are less likely to turn to alcohol or drugs. AND they are more likely to do better in school!
3. Parents need to make sure their kids know the family rules, and consequences about drug and alcohol use. 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. Taking a tough stand can help our kids to say no. Our decisions, and our rules, can allow our child to use us as "the reason" for not using alcohol or drugs, Ex My mom or my dad would kill me if I drank or used.
4. Pay attention to who your child is hanging out with and get to know them. Sometimes you have to help them choose their friends wisely. Explain to them that real friends don't try to get them to do something that will get them into trouble. Using drugs or alcohol is not a way to make friends, fit in or to feel accepted.
5. Encourage involvement in all kinds of school activities, such as clubs, sports, band, etc. Involvement in other outside activities

is helpful as well, such as Girl/Boy Scouts, 4-H, Tae Kwon Do, etc. Help your child to learn to have fun, plus they are doing things that are physically and mentally healthy. Boredom can sometimes lead to experimentation. The more active your child is the less time they have to get caught up in the pressure from peers to drink alcohol or use drugs.

6. Be a good listener. If kids know they can come talk to you, and ask questions, without being judged, they will be more likely to be open and discuss their concerns and worries.
7. Keep track of your child's activities. Research has found that young people who are not regularly monitored by their parents are four times more likely to use alcohol or drugs.
8. If you suspect your child may have a problem with drugs or alcohol seek help immediately. The longer the problem goes on the more difficult it is get help for them. Know the warning signs!

Warning Signs of Alcohol or Drug Abuse

(no one sign is proof of drug abuse, but if you notice any of these signs it would be important to start paying closer attention to your child and his/her activities)

- Has new friends you don't know and is abandoning old friends
- Has unexplained mood swings
- Becomes indifferent to dress and hygiene and has an unkempt appearance
- Is generally fatigued and loses interest in food
- Shows a decline in school performance
- Has unexplained amounts of money
- Has decreased interest in extracurricular activities
- Is lying, stealing, or cheating
- Has recurring absences from regularly scheduled activities such as school or family occasion

- (information from Drug Free, A SUSO Approach to Prevent Drug Abuse)

***Basically, any changes in your child's behavior should be a red flag that something is going on with your child that needs a closer look.**

What do you do if you suspect your child is using drugs or alcohol?

1. Try to talk to your child about your suspicions. This should be done at a time when both you and your child are calm. If you are calm your child will be more likely to talk openly to you. If you are angry this will shut down any hope for a conversation with your child.
2. Set limits that will help remove your child from circumstances where drug use might occur. Ex. Set a curfew. Ask where they are going and who they are going to be with. If you know that a student has a history of drug or alcohol use don't let your child go to their house.
3. Seek assistance from a drug treatment specialist.
4. If you need help finding resources talk to your child's school. The counselor, or administration, can help you find the appropriate help for your child.