

General Tips:

1. **Get educated about the substances your kids are exposed to today.** Drugs are stronger, different, more available, putting kids at greater risk. Also, kids are abusing prescription and OTC (over-the-counter) drugs to get high. To learn more, visit TheAntiDrug.com.
2. **Know your kids' friends and their families.** You can receive valuable information from friends' parents. Develop those lines of communication. Know other families' rules and attitudes about alcohol, other drugs and other risky behavior.
3. **Set a good example.** Be aware of the role alcohol and other drugs play in your life. Kids often do as they see you do, not as you say.
4. **Have dinner together regularly.** Studies show that families that dine together regularly communicate better, feel more connected, and have kids less likely to exhibit risky behavior.
5. **Monitor your kids' behavior.** Know where they are, who they are with, and what condition they are in when they return home.
6. **If you sense a problem with drugs or alcohol seek help right away.** Don't wait until a crisis pulls your family apart. Seek out a school social worker, therapist, or psychologist to help you. For referrals, you can call the LEAD office for confidential suggestions.
7. **Exchange ideas with other parents.** Attend parent workshops or form a group with your friends. Agree to help one another hold the line and protect kids. Join the Speak Up! Prevention Coalition. Their mission is to significantly reduce the level of underage drinking and other drug use in our communities. Visit: SpeakUpLFLB.com

"DID YOU DO DRUGS?"

It's difficult to know what to say. The conversation doesn't have to be awkward, and you can use it to your advantage to make a point. Be honest, but limit your responses. Use this as an opportunity to speak openly about why drugs are dangerous and why you want your kids to remain alcohol and drug-free.

Find more at:

TimeToTalk.org

TheAntiDrug.com

LEAD is dedicated to promoting healthy family relationships and preventing alcohol, tobacco, other drug use and other risky behavior by youth

For more information, visit: LEADweb.org

SpeakUpLFLB.com

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2010 Edition

LEAD
Strong Families
Healthy Youth

Talking Tips

Start the
Conversation NOW!



Parents are the most powerful influence in their children's lives



Speak UP!
Prevention Coalition

Ages 4-7

Now is the time to begin the conversation:

- Be open to questions your children might have. Help them understand the difference between medicine and drugs used for purposes other than getting well. Make certain they know only to take medicine that the doctor has prescribed for them. Medicine belonging to others could be dangerous and make them sick!
- Talk to your spouse and determine the role that alcohol, smoking or other drug consumption plays in your family and how you want it viewed by your children.
- Talk to your children at bedtime. It's a time when both parent and child are relaxed. Parents who listen and encourage conversations have been shown to have more success raising children who make good decisions.
- If your child seems troubled or unhappy, help him or her through it. They will learn to trust you and come to you with problems.

Ages 8-10

Be aware of your own attitudes about drugs and alcohol. Clearly communicate your values:

- Don't be a clueless parent. Be realistic about the potential for your child to be exposed to alcohol, tobacco, prescription, over-the-counter (OTC) and other drugs.
- If you have not initiated a discussion about the risks of alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use, now is the time to do it.
- Try to be factual without exaggeration. Explain why some people use those substances and what risks they are taking.

Ages 11-14

Use these tips to help deal with situations that can arise in middle school:

- Be supportive, involved and understanding with your preteens/young teens, even if they act in ways that confuse or annoy you. They will be less likely to pursue risky behavior.
- Kids this age are curious about alcohol and other drugs. Provide them with the facts. Use TV shows, newspaper articles, and information from their health classes to help initiate a family conversation.
- Reinforce that the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs is not allowed and that you will be terribly disappointed if they participate in such behavior.
- Just because it's in a family medicine cabinet doesn't mean that it is safe to take. When abused, these medications can be as dangerous as illegal drugs. Talk to them about how to say "no." Let them blame you. "My mom would kill me if I took that!"
- Monitor your inventory of alcohol, prescription and OTC drugs in your home. Lock them up if you can to avoid potential problems. Dispose of unwanted medicines. Visit LEADweb.org for safe disposal sites.
- Practice role playing to help your children deal with situations where they may be faced with choices about alcohol or other drug use. Establish a code word over the phone to enable them to get out of situations without losing face. Pick them up immediately if they use the code word!

Ages 15-18

Communicate the family rules ...

- Be realistic about consequences: "grounded for life" is not effective, even though you wish it could be at times.
- About 40% of teens report that painkillers are easy to get. 70% of abusers get them from a friend or relative. Set clear rules for teens about all drug use, including prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs. Lock up your meds and dispose of unwanted medication safely.
- Consider eliminating sleepovers. They're difficult to supervise and groups of teens are more likely to engage in risky behavior.
- Watch for signs of alcohol, tobacco or other drug use – these are the most risky years. Check out your teen's room on occasion. Be educated on the latest drugs and paraphernalia. Have your child check in when they return home from an evening out. Require them to wake you to check in, if necessary.
- Emphasize that while a designated driver may help with risks on the road, it does nothing to protect them from the many other risks of drinking, e.g., sexual assault or overdose.
- Discuss college visits with your teen. Visits without parents can put teens at risk.
- Talk to your teen about how alcohol and other drug use can affect academic and sports performance and may jeopardize college acceptances and scholarships.