

Substance Abuse Prevention

Part II Additional Information



First a child needs roots to grow...then wings to fly

As a parent you can do a lot to prevent your child from using drugs. Use the following tips to help guide your child's thoughts and behaviors about drugs:

- 1. Talk with your child honestly.** Don't wait to have "the drug talk" with your child. Make discussions about tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs part of your daily conversation. Know the facts about how drugs can harm your child. Clear up any wrong information, such as "everybody drinks" or "marijuana won't hurt you." Be clear about family rules for use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.
- 2. Really listen to your child.** Encourage your child to share questions and concerns about tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Do not do all the talking or give long lectures.
- 3. Help your child develop self-confidence.** Look for all the good things in your child—and then tell your child how proud you are. If you need to correct your child, criticize the action, not your child. Praise your child's efforts as well as successes.
- 4. Help your child develop strong values.** Talk about your family values. Teach your child how to make decisions based on these standards of right and wrong. Explain that these are the standards for your family, no matter what other families might decide.
- 5. Be a good example.** Look at your own habits and thoughts about tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Your actions speak louder than words.
- 6. Help your child deal with peer pressure and acceptance.** Discuss the importance of being an individual and the meaning of real friendships. Help your child to understand that he does not have to do something wrong just to feel accepted. Remind your child that a real friend won't care if he does not use tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.
- 7. Make family rules that help your child say "no."** Talk with your child about your expectation that he will say "no" to drugs. Spell out what will happen if he breaks these rules. (For example, "My parents said I can't use the car if I drink.") Be prepared to follow through, if necessary.
- 8. Encourage healthy, creative activities.** Look for ways to get your child involved in athletics, hobbies, school clubs, and other activities that reduce boredom and excess free time. Encourage positive friendships and interests. Look for activities that you and your child can do together.
- 9. Team up with other parents.** Work with other parents to build a drug-free environment for children. When parents join together against drug use, they are much more effective than when they act alone. One way

is to form a parent group with the parents of your child's friends. The best way to stop a child from using drugs is to stop his friends from using them too.

- 10. Know what to do if your child has a drug problem.** Realize that no child is immune to drugs. Learn the signs of drug use. Take seriously any concerns you hear from friends, teachers, or other kids about your child's possible drug use. Trust your instincts. If you truly feel that something is wrong with your child, it probably is. If there's a problem, seek professional help.

Tobacco, alcohol, and the media

A big influence on a teen's decision to use tobacco or alcohol is the media. Young people today are surrounded by messages in the media that smoking cigarettes, using smokeless tobacco, and drinking alcohol are normal, desirable, and harmless. Alcohol and tobacco companies spend billions of dollars every year promoting their products on TV, in movies and magazines, on billboards, and at sporting events. In fact, tobacco and alcohol products are among the most advertised products in the nation. Young people are the primary targets of many of these ads.

Ads for these products appeal to young people by suggesting that drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes will make them more popular, sexy, and successful. Help your teenager understand the difference between the misleading messages in advertising and the truth about the dangers of using alcohol and tobacco products.

What parents can do:

- Talk about ads with your child. Help your child understand the real messages being conveyed.
- Teach your child to be a wary consumer.
- Make sure the TV shows and movies your child watches do not glamorize the use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.
- Do not allow your child to wear T-shirts, jackets, or hats that promote alcohol or tobacco products.
- Talk to administrators at your teen's school about starting a media education program.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

