



Your kids are home for the summer; Parents, talk to them about risky behaviors

Many parents wrestle with the issue of underage drinking or marijuana use. Ideally, no parent wants their teen to drink or use drugs, but some parents are tempted to accept their teen's use with the hope that the parent can better control it. So what are you to do? Here are some tips:

- There is no "safe" level of alcohol or drug use when it comes to teenagers. To keep your kids safe, adopt a "no use" policy. Make sure your kids know they are not allowed to drink at other people's homes as well.
- As parents or caregivers, present a united front whenever possible, especially when it comes to issues regarding your teen's safety and protection.
- If you disagree, try not to argue or discuss your conflict in front of your teen. If your teen knows you disagree, he/she may try to take advantage of the situation and play one parent off of another.
- Remember that your spouse has your child's best interests at heart, even if you disagree. Try to talk when you are calm and be respectful. If you still can't agree, seek out a third-party together (a trusted friend, minister or counselor) for guidance.
- Don't send mixed messages by trying to "bargain" with your teen about drinking and other risky behaviors. Trying to limit use to a parent's house or restrict driving tells your teen that drinking is okay, and puts him at risk.
- Forget about being the "cool" parent. Parents who are permissive have kids who are more likely to get into trouble, including traffic crashes and engaging in violence, sex and substance use.
- Make sure you model responsible behavior when it comes to alcohol.
- Know that in many states you are breaking the law if you provide alcohol to underage kids in your home.
- Monitor and address sources of alcohol and tobacco for teens in your community. Talk to school or city officials or other parents to learn more about where teens are getting these substances, including social sources (e.g. young adults) and commercial establishments.

Here are more resources to help you talk to your child or teen:

Make A Difference - Talk to your Child about Alcohol

[\[http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/MakeADiff_HTML/MakeAdiff.pdf\]](http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/MakeADiff_HTML/MakeAdiff.pdf)

This 24 pg brochure contains information to help parents discuss alcohol issues with young people ages 10-14.

Keep Kids Alcohol Free: Strategies for Action

[\[http://www.alcoholfreechildren.org/en/pubs/pdf/prevention.pdf\]](http://www.alcoholfreechildren.org/en/pubs/pdf/prevention.pdf)

This brochure describes three basic strategies for preventing alcohol use by children ages 9-15 and ways these strategies can be applied in the home, the school, and the community.

Talking With Kids About Alcohol and Drugs

[\[http://www.talkingwithkids.org/drugs.html\]](http://www.talkingwithkids.org/drugs.html)

Website, Talking with Kids About Tough Issues

How to Hold Crucial Conversations About Drugs With Your Teenager

[\[http://www.theantidrug.com/pdfs/resources/general/crucial-conversations.pdf\]](http://www.theantidrug.com/pdfs/resources/general/crucial-conversations.pdf)

Tip Card

Power of a Grandparent

[\[http://www.drugfreeinfo.org/PDFs/grandparent.pdf\]](http://www.drugfreeinfo.org/PDFs/grandparent.pdf)

To help grandparents know what to say about drugs and how to say it, the Partnership for a Drug-Free Iowa has created a booklet containing a few age appropriate and easy-to-follow tips. The brief Power of Grandparents guide tells how to initiate discussion about drugs with grandchildren, and how to keep the conversation going.