

Talking to Teenagers About Drugs

Parents or caregivers who are educated about drugs can also educate their children and clear up possible misconceptions. As a role model, your views on alcohol, tobacco, and drugs can strongly influence your children. Talking about drugs should be a normal part of health and safety conversations. As teenagers, they often seek answers elsewhere, even if their sources are unreliable. This can put your child at greater risk of engaging in unsafe behaviors and experimenting with drugs.



Teenagers are likely to know people who use alcohol or drugs, and to have friends who drive. Many are still willing to express their thoughts or concerns with their parents about it. They may start asking you more specific questions about drugs. Use these conversations not only to understand your child's thoughts and feelings, but also to talk about the dangers of driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Talk about the legal issues — jail time and fines — and the possibility that they or someone else could be killed or seriously injured.

Consider making a written or verbal contract on the rules about going out or using the car. You can promise to pick your children up at any time of the night, no questions asked, if they need a ride home because they are not able to drive home safely.

The contract also can detail other situations. For example, if you find out that someone drank or used drugs in your car while your son or daughter was behind the wheel, you could suspend driving privileges for six months. By discussing all of this with your children from the start, you eliminate surprises and make your expectations clear.

A warm, open family environment encourages your children to come forward with their questions and concerns. Pay attention to how your children are feeling and let them know that you are available and willing to listen in a nonjudgmental way. Make conversations with your children a regular part of your day. In addition, finding time to do things you enjoy together as a family helps everyone stay connected and maintain open communication.

If you would like more information about alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs, please call us at 1.800.928.8000 and ask to speak to a Prevention Specialist. We can help.