

Prevention Strategies for Parents

*Did you know that parents actually have **more** influence over their tweens and teens than sports and entertainment celebrities, the internet, and even friends? Studies show that kids who learn about the risks of drugs and alcohol from their parents and caregivers are up to 50% less likely to use drugs and alcohol than those who do not. These studies also show that the fear of disappointing parents is the number one reason tweens and teens decide not to use.*

Talking to children about drugs isn't a one-time event. Strive for a number of talks about substance use from preschool through teenage years.

Here is an abbreviated guide to building a positive relationship with your kids and starting conversations with them about alcohol and drugs.

1. Talk with your kids often and maintain good communication.

Why? The better you know your children, the easier it will be to guide them towards positive activities and friendships.

How?

- Talk to your children every day. Share what happened to you and ask what happened to them during the day.
- Ask questions that kids can't answer with "yes" or "no." For example, "what was your favorite part of the day?" Ask your children their opinions and include them in making decisions. Show your children that you value their thoughts and input.
- Listen to your child's or teen's concerns non-judgmentally. Repeat their concerns back to them to make it clear that you understand. Don't preach.
- Aim for a 50/50 conversation - you talk half the time and listen the other half.

2. Get involved in your children's lives.

Why? Young people are less likely to get involved with drugs when caring adults are a part of their life.

How?

- Support your children's activities by attending special events, like recitals and games, and praising them for their efforts.
- Help your children manage problems by asking what is wrong when they seem upset and letting them know you are there to help. When your child seems angry or upset, start a conversation with an observation like "you seem sad" or "you seem stressed."
- Be patient and understanding about their problems with friends.
- Know your children's friends by name and know their parents name and contact information.
- When your child is going to someone's house, call to make sure a trusted adult is there.
- Encourage your child to call any time they feel uncomfortable.

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3. Make clear rules and enforce them consistently.

Why? Research shows that when parents set harsh rules or no rules, kids are more likely to try drugs.

How?

- Talk to your child about rules at a calm time. Explain the rules, for example what time they must come home, and the consequence for breaking the rule.
- If a rule is broken, be sure to enforce the consequences. This teaches children to take responsibility for their actions.
- Give praise when your children follow rules and meet expectations.



4. Be a positive role model.

Why? Children learn from what they see. Their attitudes about substance use will be shaped by your attitudes and actions.

How?

- Demonstrate ways to solve problems, have fun, and manage stress without using alcohol, tobacco or drugs. Exercising, listening to music, engaging in a hobby and talking issues over with a friend are some examples. If you occasionally drink alcohol, do so in moderation and never imply that alcohol is a good way to handle problems.
- Treatment works and recovery is possible. If you are struggling with substance abuse, seek help.



5. Talk to your children about drugs.

Why? When parents talk to their kids early and often about substance abuse, kids are less likely to try drugs.

How?

- Educate yourself about alcohol, tobacco, and drug use before talking to your children. If your child asks you a question that you don't know the answer to, promise to find the right answer so that you can learn together.
- Short discussions go a long way. Engage your children in a conversation. Ask what they know, how they feel, and what they think about the issue.
- Tell them the dangers of using drugs & alcohol using age-appropriate explanations.
- Explain why you don't want them to use drugs and alcohol. For example, explain how drugs and alcohol can interfere with young people's concentration, memory and motor skills, and that it leads to poor school performance.
- Don't react in anger – even if your child makes statements that shock you.

Visit ChecktheStatsNH.org for more tips on talking to your child at any age; to find contact information for resources in your area; and to view statistics on teen drug and alcohol use in New Hampshire.



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