



THE POWER OF CHOICE
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The impact on teens' decision to not use alcohol

About This Issue

In this issue we explore the benefits of prevention in the community when talking to teens about not using alcohol.

THE PARENT POST } Summer Issue 2019

MIDDLE SCHOOL EDITION

Look for some of our latest parent PSAs on Facebook!

01 Keep Monitoring & Keep Talking

Welcome to the Final 2019 school year issue of the Parent Post, Middle School edition. In this issue we are continuing the conversation about the importance of monitoring and talking with your teens about the consequences of underage alcohol use. It is important that parents are not only informing their youth, but also themselves about the risk factors that could lead their teens toward the unhealthy decision to use alcohol.

Keep Talking - Be Consistent and Loving, but Firm. Bottom line: it just isn't possible for parents to be with their teens 24/7 to protect them from harm. But parents can and should do the best they can to prepare their teens to be able to handle pressure and temptations to use alcohol and drugs. It is a big part of parental responsibility. In fact, parents have the best chance of helping shape their teens' attitudes and beliefs about alcohol and other drugs by virtue of their own behavior.

Above all, be loving parents. Keep the lines of communication open and honest. You and your children are in this together. You also want the best for their future. Give them the solid foundation they need to grow up with self-confidence, to be able to face life's challenges and stresses and opportunities – without turning to alcohol and other drugs.

Keep conversations going from their early childhood through adolescence and the teen years. Be consistent, stay on message, be loving, but firm, and always be there for your children. **Be open about things like:**

- An upcoming trip or event, something on sale or something else that will spark your teen's interest and excitement.
- Make time for one-on-one talks with your teen about anything that seems to be bothering them – or gently try to determine what may be wrong, if you notice a difference in attitude, dress, manner of speech, appearance or disappearance of certain friends, and so on.
- Creating a pledge between yourself and your children that promises they will not drink alcohol or use other types of drugs.



Stay up to date on our parent campaign on [facebook.com/powerofchoice360](https://www.facebook.com/powerofchoice360)

The Power of Choice provides parents with a wealth of information they can use as they guide their children through the exciting teenage years.

In partnership with



The Power of Choice is a project of 360 Youth Services, Naperville School District 203, Indian Prairie School District 204, Naperville Police Department, KidsMatter and District 203 & 204 parents.

02 ◀ Be Aware of Risk Factors

Keep Monitoring - Be Aware of Risk Factors

Being a responsible and loving parent also means that you take the time to familiarize yourself with risk factors that may propel your teen toward alcohol and drug use, including:

- » Any significant social transition, such as moving from middle school to high school and getting a driver's license
- » Any family history of alcoholism or drug use
- » Anxiety, depression and other serious emotional problems
- » A history of social and emotional difficulties
- » Any contact with peers involved in troubling or suspicious activities

Teen substance use contributes to some of the most glaring barriers to health and productivity facing the current generation of teenagers in the United States. For example:

Teen tobacco, alcohol and marijuana users are at least twice as likely as nonusers to have poor grades.

Alcohol-induced damage has been observed in the brains of binge-drinking teens. Teens with alcohol use disorders have more self-reported health problems (including problems with sleep, eating and vision) and more abnormalities during physical examinations (including in the abdominal region as well as in their respiratory and cardiovascular systems) than those without alcohol use disorders.

Some Teens Face Personal Challenges that Compound Their Risk of Substance Use and Addiction

Some of these risks include:

A genetic predisposition toward developing an addiction or a family history of substance use disorders; adverse childhood events, such as abuse, neglect or other trauma, co-occurring mental health problems, peer victimization or bullying, and engagement in other health- and safety-risk behaviors such as early or unsafe sex, unhealthy weight control behaviors, risky driving or violent or aggressive behavior.

Not only are these teens more likely to use addictive substances and to develop substance use disorders, but many of them also are more likely to start using substances at a young age, to use multiple addictive substances and to progress more quickly to heavy use and addiction.

Certain sub-groups of adolescents--such as those who are in the child welfare system, drop out of high school, are involved with the criminal justice system or have a minority sexual or gender identity - also are at elevated risk for substance use, addiction and their health and social consequences.

04 ◀ Parental & Community Impact



How Your Community Views Underage Alcohol Use Plays a Big Role

Disapproval from the larger community in which teens live also can help protect teens; however, substance-related images are pervasive in neighborhood-based advertising and retail sales across the country, sending the message that substance use is a normal part of life. Greater numbers of tobacco and alcohol retail outlets in a community relate to increased risk of adolescent substance use.

Depictions of smoking, vaping and drinking in social media, television shows and movies popular with teens also have an impact. For example, the odds of becoming a tobacco user are more than doubled by exposure to tobacco marketing and media images of tobacco use. Alcohol advertising is related to young people's attitudes and expectations regarding drinking and to their risk of alcohol use.

What Can Parents Do?

Parents are the single strongest influence—for better or worse—on their teens' choices to smoke, vape, drink or use other drugs. Parents must recognize that substance use is a real and present threat to their teens' health, safety and future and take steps to prevent it. Parents set rules and expectations to protect their children from many harms, such as requiring that they wear seat belts, not text while driving, be sexually abstinent or avoid unprotected sex, or limit their junk food intake. Requiring their teens to refrain from tobacco, alcohol and other drug use is just as important and could have significant lifesaving outcomes.

Parents should get the facts; set a good example; restrict access to addictive substances; communicate clear, consistent no-use messages; consistently enforce rules; monitor their teens; require that their health care providers address this issue in the context of routine professional care; and get help fast at the earliest signs of trouble. Parents should set the norms of behavior for their teens and for other parents as well.

The Benefits of Prevention

As with any other behavioral health problem, effective prevention starts at home. Teens at reduced risk for substance use live in homes where parents model healthy behavior, create a nurturing family environment, play an active role in their children's lives, communicate openly and honestly about substance use and set and enforce clear rules.

They also have the companionship and guidance of positive adult role models, strong attachments to their schools or communities and goals for the future. Those who participate in clubs, community service or volunteer activities or are involved in religious or spiritual practice are at reduced risk as well.

Additional Resources for you ▶

The Power of Choice Parental Resources - Power Talks & Past Newsletters can be read at: <http://www.thepowerofchoice.info>

Connect with The Power of Choice online and on social media:

Contact: Jennifer Lezan
6-8th Grade Campaign Coordinator
Jlezan@360youthservices.org

