



Talking with your teenager about alcohol


It is important to talk to your child about alcohol or any other drug use before it happens, just as you would with any other health related issue. Make it clear what your expectations are about alcohol and have a plan for your teenager so they know what to do if they or a friend gets into difficulty after drinking alcohol.

What parents can do

- ▶ Talk to your teenager about the effects of alcohol on their developing brain – even if they don't drink alcohol. Explain the risks and harms associated with drinking at a young age. Be clear, confident and consistent. Point out that some of your teenager's goals may be less achievable if they choose to drink alcohol from an early age.



Watch *Under Construction: Alcohol and the Teenage Brain*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=163&v=g2gVzVIBc_g

- ▶ Use examples of **alcohol use problems** portrayed in the media to start a conversation with your teenager (eg violence, glassing and car crashes).
- ▶ **Some parents think they can control the amount of alcohol their teenager drinks by providing it for them.** There is little evidence to support this belief and in fact in many cases, young people may drink what their parents have given them plus more. Giving alcohol to teenagers can give them the message that you approve of underage drinking and that it's okay to drink alcohol.
- ▶ Talk to the parents of your teenager's friends and **set some rules** about alcohol not being allowed at gatherings.
- ▶ Talk about how **other people's drinking** might affect them. Help your teenager come up with some responses that they can use as a reason to refuse alcohol or other drugs. This will help them to stay safe in a number of situations and respond and cope with any pressures to drink, defuse a possibly violent situation, and avoid getting in a vehicle with an intoxicated driver. Being able to tell their friends why they don't want to drink and 'save face' can make your teenager feel more confident eg 'Mum and Dad will ground me if I do that!'
- ▶ **Keep talking** with your teenager so that they feel comfortable to talk to you about the things they are worried about.
- ▶ **'Look after your mate'** is a message to give your teenager, especially if their friend has consumed too much alcohol. Show your teenager how to place someone in the recovery position. Tell them why it is important for them to call for help and explain that even though some young people think that calling an ambulance means the police will arrive too, that this is not the case. The police will only attend if ambulance staff feel threatened or the patient dies at the scene. Book into a St John Ambulance first aid course with your teenager.
- ▶ **If you drink alcohol**, your children will be watching what you do. Drink responsibly and within safe limits.
- ▶ **If you don't drink alcohol**, explain to your children why you have made this decision.
- ▶  Watch the video clip *Teach teens to play it safe with alcohol* on the Alcohol Think Again website in the 'What parents need to know' section <http://alcoholthinkagain.com.au/>



Remember you are not the only parent trying to work out how best to talk to your teenager about alcohol and drugs. These websites and call lines can help.

SDERA sdera.wa.edu.au

Drug Aware drugaware.com.au

Australian Drug Foundation
www.adf.org.au

Alcohol and Drug Support Line
Phone: (08) 9442 5000

Country callers: 1800 198 024

E-mail: alcoholdrugsupport@mhc.wa.gov.au

Parent and Family Drug Support Line
Phone: (08) 9442 5050

Country callers: 1800 653 203

Email: alcoholdrugsupport@mhc.wa.gov.au

Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service

Phone: (08) 9221 1411

Parents and families are strong influences in what young people think about alcohol and how they use it.