



Helping teens stay drug-free

Abuse of drugs, including tobacco and alcohol, keeps people from having the best lives they can. Substance abuse hurts people who take drugs and the people around them. Substance abuse hurts the body and the brain, sometimes forever. The good news: treatment works. It helps people recover from addiction or dependency. But the best protection from the dangers of drugs is to not start in the first place.

The teen years are the most likely time for someone to start taking drugs. Kids hear about drugs everywhere: on TV, radio, social media, the news, in music and movies, on the street or on the playground. Starting drug use as a teen can lead to more substance use problems.

Commonly abused drugs

It is important to get the facts about drugs. The most commonly abused drugs include:

- Marijuana
- Cocaine
- Heroin
- Prescription painkillers
- PCP
- Meth
- Acid/LSD/Mescaline
- Steroids
- Alcohol
- Cigarettes and tobacco

Other drugs of abuse are becoming more common. They may have bad side effects. They can lead to addiction or death. Some are sold legally. They include:

- Ecstasy/Molly (MDMA).
- K2 or Spice.
- “Club” drugs. They may be passed around at nightclubs and parties. They include “GHB” and Ketamine (“Special K”).
- Inhalants. People breathe in these substances. They are found in cleaners, spray cans, glue and permanent markers.

For more information about these and other drugs of abuse and their effects, visit www.easyread.drugabuse.gov.

Unusual drugs of abuse

Some teens are using hand sanitizers and some energy drinks to get high. They have dangerous side effects and can cause addiction. A newer drug of abuse is called “bath salts.” This is not for the bathtub. It is a chemical powder that acts like cocaine. The drug causes bad medical and psychological side effects. Bath salts have been linked to emergency room visits across the country. Some states are banning the sale of this product.

For more information about unusual drugs of abuse, visit www.drugabuse.gov.

What you can do

Parents and other caring adults have a key role in helping children and teens stay drug-free.

- Talk with your children about drugs. Explain how taking drugs can hurt their health, their friends and family, and their future.
- Be part of their lives. Kids need to know that the adults in their life care about them.
- Know where your children are and what they're doing. Keeping track of your children helps you protect them.
- Set clear rules and enforce them fairly. Kids need rules they can count on. That is how they learn what is safe and what can get them in trouble.
- Be a good example for your children. Show them how you get along with people and deal with stress.
- Teach children how to refuse drugs. Help them practice how to say no if someone offers them drugs.
- Make your home safe. Do not have people in the house who abuse drugs and alcohol. Keep track of medicines and cleaning products.

What if you think your child is using drugs?

Kids try drugs for many reasons. They may be bored. They may want to be part of the crowd. They may be curious. Try to connect with your teen.

- Talk with your child. Do this when everyone is calm, and you have plenty of time.
- Your teen may deny using drugs. Your child may get angry and try to change the subject.
- Don't get mad or accuse your child of being stupid or bad or an embarrassment.
- Be firm but loving with your tone. Try not to argue.

Some things to say:

- You love your child, and you are worried.
- You are there to listen.
- You want your child to be part of the solution.
- Tell your child what you will do to help.

What to say if you once used drugs

If you used or abused drugs at some time in your life, it may be hard to tell others not to do drugs. If you choose to talk about your drug past:

- Don't give a lot of details.
- Point out the problems your drug use might have caused you.
- Explain why you wouldn't use drugs now.
- Say you want your kids to avoid making the same mistakes.

For substance abuse information or to find local providers and services, visit www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov.

Resources

Get the facts about substance abuse. Find tips on talking to children and teens about drugs:

- www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov
- www.drugfree.org
- <http://healthfinder.gov/prevention>
- www.theantidrug.com
- www.easyread.drugabuse.gov
- www.stopalcoholabuse.gov

Helpful websites for kids and teens:

- <http://teens.drugabuse.gov>
- <http://checkyourself.com>
- www.abovetheinfluence.com
- www.thecoolspot.gov
- www.toosmarttostart.samhsa.gov
- www.bblocks.samhsa.gov
- www.freevibe.com

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