



It's not too early!

Talking to Your Child about Alcohol and Other Drugs

It might seem too early to talk about alcohol, nicotine, and other drugs with your elementary-aged child, but the attitudes and habits formed during this phase of life have an important bearing on how they make decisions in the future.

A child in elementary school usually shows increasing interest in the world outside the family and home. Now is the time to begin to explain what alcohol, nicotine, and drugs are, that some people use them even though they are harmful, and what the consequences of using them are.

- **Set aside regular times when you can give your child your full attention.** Talk about their likes and dislikes. Let them know you love them and care about their health and safety. Building strong bonds of trust and affection will help them be resilient in the years to come!
- **Praise your children** for taking good care of their bodies and avoiding things that might harm them.
- **Watch TV and movies with your child.** If alcohol, vaping, tobacco, or other drugs come up, talk to them about what they know about them.
- **Set clear rules.** Make sure your child knows your no-use expectations and consequences.
- **Teach your child** that alcohol and other drugs are harmful to young brains and bodies. Explain that kids' brains are growing and it is important to do everything we can to protect growing brains. Discuss how anything you put in your body that is not food can be extremely harmful, and how drugs interfere with the way our bodies work. Explain that alcohol and other drugs can make a person very sick or even cause them to die.
- **Explain the idea of addiction** - that drug use can become a disease and that using drugs can become very hard to stop, even if the person wants to quit.
- **Be a role model.** If you drink alcohol or smoke/vape, be mindful of the message you're sending to your child. Do not involve your child in adult behaviors like fetching or touching, alcohol, vaping products, or tobacco.

Set aside time to connect

Praise them for making good choices

Be a Role Model

By the time your child is in 3rd grade, they should understand:

- How foods, poisons, medicines, and drugs differ.
- How medicines prescribed by a doctor and given to them by a responsible adult may help during illness, but can be harmful if misused, so children need to stay away from any unknown substance or container.
- Kids should know not to take another person's medicine and not to share their medicine with anyone else.
- Why adults may drink alcohol or use nicotine, but children may not, even in small amounts - it's harmful to children's developing brains and bodies!



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