



Talking to Your Child about Alcohol and Other Drugs

Adolescence is often a confusing and stressful time, characterized by mood changes and deep insecurity. During this time, teens struggle to figure out who they are and how to fit in while establishing their own identities. It's not surprising that this is the time when many young people try alcohol, nicotine, and other drugs for the first time.

Even if it doesn't always feel like it, parents and caring adults have more influence with their child than friends, music, TV, the internet, and celebrities. **Your words are powerful**, so take the time to talk to your child about alcohol, vaping, marijuana, and prescription drugs, and make your no-use stance known. These tips will help:



Listen:

- Bring up the subject when you and your child are both relaxed and can have a calm conversation. Don't rush.
- Allow your child to speak without interruption.



Explain:

- **Don't threaten or give ultimatums.** Make sure your child understands your rules but avoid general threats, such as, "I better not catch you drinking or else."
- **Explain the facts** about alcohol, vaping, marijuana, and other drugs (learn more at [ParentUpKC.com](https://parentupkc.com)).
- **Set your family rules** concerning alcohol, vaping, marijuana, and other drug use and communicate them to your child. Communicate the consequences if a rule is broken.



Encourage:

- **Encourage your child not to drink alcohol or use other drugs because:**
 - It's illegal and they may get in legal trouble
 - It can make them sick and negatively affects their growing brain by impairing memory and learning
 - It can lead to dangerous situations and consequences like accidents and sexual assault
 - Drinking alcohol or using other drugs like marijuana or nicotine can quickly lead to addiction - a struggle that could be lifelong
- **Empower your child's healthy decisions.** Give them opportunities to make their own decisions, such as choosing the movie or what's for dinner. Build their confidence and assure them they are strong enough to fight off peer pressure.
- **Express your respect and admiration of your child.** Tell your child you're proud of them for being able to handle tough situations and make healthy decisions.



Take Action:

- **Get to know your child's friends and their parents.** Make sure your child knows that parents talk to each other and you hear what's going on at school.
- **Do your research** and learn as much as you can about how using alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs during the adolescent years while the brain is still developing can have negative and possibly permanent negative consequences, including lifelong addiction, overdose, and death.
- **Check in with your child often.** Spend quality time together. Check in before they leave the house and again when they come home.

Visit [ParentUpKC.com](https://parentupkc.com) for more tips, tools, and resources!

