



The use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs is one of the biggest problems facing teens today. Good communication between parents and teens is one of the best ways to prevent substance abuse. The providers at Advanced Pediatrics support proactive communication with teens regarding substance abuse. If you have concerns about substance abuse or suspect that your teen may be using tobacco, alcohol or drugs, please discuss your concerns with one of our providers.

Parents are powerful!

Parents are the strongest influence on whether teens will use tobacco, alcohol and drugs. Teens are much less likely to experiment with these dangerous substances if parents:

- Provide guidance and clear rules against substance abuse.
- Spend ample time with their children.
- Do not use tobacco, alcohol or drugs themselves.

What messages do your actions and words send to your teen?

Actions speak louder than words. Teens really do notice what their parents say and do.

- Do you usually offer alcoholic drinks to friends and family when they come to your home?
- Do you inappropriately use medications or alcohol if you are under stress or having difficulty sleeping?
- Do you smoke cigarettes?
- Do you make jokes about getting drunk or using drugs?
- Do you attend parties that involve a lot of drinking?
- Do you drink and drive or ride with drivers who have been drinking?
- Has your teen ever seen you drunk?
- Do you let minors drink alcohol in your home?

Educate your teen about the dangers of substance abuse:

Discuss with your teen the negative effects of these substances on his brain, body and ability to learn, make good decisions and play sports. Correct any false beliefs your teen may have such as "everybody drinks" or "marijuana won't hurt you".

Tobacco

The good news is that 80% of teenagers do not smoke. The bad news is that 90% of smokers begin smoking during their teen years. Unfortunately, over the past 10 years the number of smokers has decreased in every age-group except among teenagers. In fact, more than one million teens start smoking in the U.S. each year. The health risks associated with smoking are numerous:

- Smoking reduces the amount of oxygen delivered to the body, damages the lungs, and causes the heart to beat faster and work less effectively. This not only is bad for a smoker's long term health, but also leads to poor athletic performance.
- Nicotine is toxic and addictive. It only takes a short time to become addicted to nicotine and the longer a person smokes, the harder it is to stop.
- Cigarettes contain 400 toxic chemicals, 40 of which are known to cause cancer.
- One third of teen smokers will eventually die of smoking related diseases. Smoking is the most preventable cause of death in the U.S.

- Smokers are 10 times more likely to die of lung cancer than nonsmokers.
- Smoking doubles the chances of heart disease.
- Smoking is the main cause of chronic bronchitis and emphysema.
- Smoking while pregnant increases the risks of premature birth, underweight babies, and infant deaths.
- Smoking harms nonsmokers who inhale "second hand" smoke because their bodies absorb nicotine, carbon monoxide and other hazardous chemicals.
- Smoking causes bad breath and stained teeth. In one study 78% of teen boys and 69% of teen girls said they would rather date someone who doesn't smoke.
- Chewing tobacco and snuff ("dip") also cause cancer - especially in the cheeks, gums and throat.

Alcohol

The statistics regarding teen alcohol abuse are sobering. According to a Georgetown University's Center 2006 status report on underage drinking:

- Alcohol use among young people under 21 is the leading drug problem in the U.S.
- One out of six eighth-graders, one in three tenth-graders, and nearly one out of two twelfth-graders drink alcohol.
- Every day, three teens die from drinking and driving. Six more are killed in alcohol-related incidents such as drowning and suicide.
- More than 70,000 college students are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape each year.

Not only does drinking pose an immediate risk to a teen's safety, mounting research suggests that alcohol causes more damage to the developing brains of teenagers than was previously thought. Recent studies have found that heavy exposure of the adolescent brain to alcohol may interfere with brain development, causing loss of memory and other skills. This damage to brain development may explain why teens who begin drinking at an early age face a significant risk of becoming alcoholics. According to the results of a national survey published in "Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine", 47% of teens who begin drinking alcohol before the age of 14 become alcohol dependent at some time in their lives, compared with 9% of those who wait at least until age 21.

Illicit Drugs

Teen use of inhalants, marijuana, prescription pain killers/stimulants/depressants, LSD, cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine MDMA (also known as ecstasy) continue to be a concern in the U.S. Generally substance abuse begins with tobacco, alcohol and marijuana use. Studies consistently show that teens that use tobacco, alcohol and marijuana are at significantly greater risk for subsequent illicit drug use and addiction. This is concerning given the following statistics regarding 2006 teen usage of these "introductory" substances.

Age	Tobacco	Alcohol	Marijuana
8 th grade	9%	17%	7%
10 th grade	15%	34%	14%
12 th grade	22%	45%	18%

The health and safety risks to teens using illicit drugs are numerous:

- Risk of addiction is high and effective treatment plans are expensive.
- Risk of relapse following treatment is also high.
- Drug use lowers inhibitions and leads to riskier behavior with serious consequences:
 - Poor school performance.
 - Social and family problems.
 - Injuries and accidents.
 - Violence, arrests and criminal activity.
 - Date rape, unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.
 - Suicide and accidental death.

For more information regarding illicit drug abuse visit:

Go Ask Alice - www.goaskalice.columbia.edu

D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) - www.dare-america.com

National Institute on Drug Abuse (Teens) - www.teens.drugabuse.gov

Teach your teen to say "No!"

Teach teens exactly how you expect them to respond if someone offers them tobacco, alcohol or drugs.

- Ask questions - "What is it?" "Where did you get it?"
- Firmly say, "No!"
- Give a reason - "No thanks, I'm not into that." Or, "No, my parents would get really mad at me."
- Suggest something else to do like watch a movie, go to the mall or play a game.
- Leave - go home, go to class, or go join other friends.
- Tell a parent, school counselor or adult what happened - especially if feeling threatened.

Help your teen to make good choices:

- Build your teen's self-esteem with praise and support for good decisions.
- Gradually allow your teen to make more decisions alone.
- Encourage positive friendships and interests. Help your teen to build friendships with kids whose families have values similar to yours. Encourage your teen to be involved in sports, hobbies, and other positive extra curricular activities. Teach your teen that the best place to meet new friends is through shared common interests like academic, extra-curricular, religious and volunteer activities.
- Help your teen to learn the importance of being responsible and choosing friends that care about him. Teens must learn that doing something they know is wrong is not a good way to "fit in". Remind your teen that real friends will not ask him to do risky things like use alcohol, tobacco or drugs... and real friends will never reject him for refusing to do something that is wrong.
- Listen to your teen. Pay attention and be helpful during periods of loneliness or doubt.
- Offer advice about handling strong emotions and feelings in a healthy way.
- Be clear and consistent about family rules. Emphasize that it doesn't matter what other families decide; your family rules are an important part of your family values!
- Be a good role model by avoiding tobacco, alcohol or other drugs yourself.

Parents guide to teenage parties:

If your teen is giving a party:

- Review plans for the party in advance including guest list, activities, refreshments etc.
- Keep parties small with a ratio of 10 - 15 teens per adult.
- Be clear that only invited guests are permitted to attend.
- Set a reasonable time when the party will start and end, keeping local curfew laws in mind.
- Set party rules ahead of time:
 - No tobacco, alcohol or other drugs.
 - No one can leave the party and then return.
 - Lights are left on at all times.
 - Certain rooms of the house are off limits.
- Remember that you are legally responsible for anything that happens to a minor who has been served alcohol or drugs in your home. Be ready to call parents of anyone who comes to the party intoxicated or brings tobacco, alcohol or drugs.
- Monitor the party without being in the way by greeting kids as they arrive, serving refreshments etc.

If your teen is going to a party:

- Call the host's parents to make sure they will be home and that tobacco, alcohol and other drugs will not be allowed.
- Confirm the address and phone number of the party and ask your teen to call you if plans change.
- Remind your teen never to ride home with a driver who has been drinking or taking drugs. Make it clear that your teen can call you at ANY time if he needs a ride home.
- Be awake to greet your teen when he comes home and ask how the party went.

Warning signs of tobacco, alcohol or illicit drug usage:

- Smell of alcohol, smoke or other chemicals on your teen's breath or clothing.
- Obvious intoxication, dizziness or bizarre behavior.
- Change in dress, appearance and grooming.
- Change in choice of friends.
- Frequent arguments, sudden mood changes and unexplained violent actions.
- Change in eating and sleeping patterns.
- Skipping school and/or falling grades.
- Runaway and delinquent behavior.
- Suicide threats or attempts.

What should parents do if they suspect their teen is using tobacco, alcohol or illicit drugs?

Before confronting your teen, consider talking to friends, relatives, teachers, school counselors and others who know him and get their impressions as to how your teen is doing. Then choose a time when your teen is awake, alert and receptive to talking and share your concerns with him. Be sure to be loving and supportive, showing your commitment that you will do whatever it takes to help him. *If you continue to suspect that your teen is using tobacco, alcohol or illicit drugs, please schedule an appointment for a consultation with one of our providers to discuss your concerns. Follow up care with a counselor, mental health provider, support group or treatment program may be recommended.*