



## Talking with your teenager about alcohol

As with any health-related issue, the best time to talk with your children about alcohol or other drug use is before it actually happens and not when a situation arises.

It's a good idea to make it clear what your expectations are about alcohol and have a plan for your children so they know what to do if they or a friend gets into difficulty after drinking alcohol.



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



- Australian Drug Foundation [www.adf.org.au](http://www.adf.org.au)
- Drug Aware [drugaware.com.au](http://drugaware.com.au)
- Alcohol and Drug Support Service (08) 9442 5000 or 1800 198 024 (country callers)

### What parents can do

- **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.
- **Talk to your children 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 alcohol can interfere with or make it harder for your children to achieve some of their goals 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=q2qVzVIBc\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=163&v=q2qVzVIBc_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 children drink 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 children can give them the message that you approve of underage drinking and that it's okay to drink alcohol.
- **Secondary supply laws make it illegal for anyone to supply alcohol to your child** under the age of 18 years in a private setting without your approval. Talk to the parents of your children's friends and let them know your stance on alcohol.
- **Talk about how other people's drinking might affect them.** Help your children come up with some responses that they can use as a reason to refuse alcohol or other drugs. This will help them to stay safer in alcohol-related situations and respond and cope better 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 children feel more confident eg 'Mum and Dad will ground me if I do that!'
- **Keep talking with your children** 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 children**, 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 children.
-  **Watch the video clip *Teach teens to play it safe with alcohol*** on the Alcohol Think Again website on the 'What parents need to know' section <http://alcoholthinkagain.com.au/>

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