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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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**Start Talking!**

Building a Drug-Free Future



## Know! What's Trending – the Tide Pod Challenge



If you are raising teenagers, you have no doubt heard of some of the ridiculous internet challenges that exist among this age group. While some of these new-age “dares” are silly and harmless, many more are dangerous and even deadly, like the one currently trending – the ‘Tide Pod Challenge.’

It has nothing to do with laundry and everything to do with getting internet “famous.” The videos that have spread like wildfire across social media look something like this – laughing, joking teens sink their teeth into one of the colorful, dessert-like looking laundry pods, then cough and gag while toxic, stain-fighting chemicals ooze from their mouths. The purpose? A few laughs from their friends and as many social media “views” as possible.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers, however, says the ‘Tide Pod Challenge’ is no joke. These pods have caused children to be hospitalized with difficulty breathing, loss of consciousness, and temporary vision loss due to chemical burns to the eye. Additionally, Consumer Reports say the ingredients in these pods can burn the mouth, digestive system, and stomach, cause gastrointestinal distress and respiratory arrest, and if they make their way into the bloodstream or organs, they can be fatal.

While concerns surrounding these types of detergent pods are not new, we used to worry that children under the age of five would unintentionally ingest them. Who would have guessed that our 13 to 19-year-olds would be intentionally biting into them?

What is a parent to do? By reading this tip, you are already taking a step in the right direction by becoming AWARE. But you must also be aware that as this Internet challenge fades out, another is sure to follow, which is why it is so important to talk with our teens about the health and safety dangers of this and other online challenges.

**Here are some points to keep in mind as you do:**



Talk early and often about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Even when it gets tough.

Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free



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• **Don't assume your child won't try it:** Remember, a teen's brain is not fully developed – impulsivity along with peer pressure and the competitive desire to one-up a peer are all powerful influencers.

• **Set clear boundaries:** Share your expectations and what you consider to be acceptable and unacceptable behavior. What your child thinks is okay, may not be okay with you.

• **State (and restate) the obvious:** While biting into a laundry detergent pod seems quite obviously NOT okay, make no assumptions when it comes to your child's safety.

• **Prompt critical thinking:** Ask your child, "What do you think could happen if you do this?" In the face of such a challenge, help your child learn to step back for a moment and apply basic logic and reason before making a decision that could impact his/her health and safety, as well as your trust.

• **Keep it positive:** Though you may be tempted to tell your teen about all the possible consequences, remember that youth are hard-wired to defend against negative messages or scare tactics. Take a step back and emphasize what your child should do, like resisting peer pressure and making healthy decisions.

It would be naive to think we will ever keep up with all the latest internet trends, dangerous or not. What we can do is talk to our children, set clear boundaries, and teach them to think critically before the next risky challenge presents itself.

*\* If you or someone you know ingests a laundry pod, or other toxic substance, call the National Poison Help Hotline at 1-800-222-1222.*

Sources: [Michael nedelman, CNN: Poison control calls 'spike' due to online laundry pod challenge. January 17, 2018.](#) [TIME: Here's How Common the Tide Pod Challenge Really Is. January 17, 2018.](#) [McAfee Blog Central: Digital Dares: Dumb Kids with Smart Phones, September 23, 2014.](#)

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