

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



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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.

Know! encourages you to share this Parent Tip with friends and family.

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## Start Talking!

Building a Drug-Free Future



## Know! Underage Drinking is a Big Deal



April is Alcohol Awareness Month: Sponsored annually by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD), this year's theme is, "Help for Today, Hope for Tomorrow."

No other substance is more widely used by America's youth than alcohol, making alcohol use disorder and alcohol-related problems the number one public health problem in the United States.

Even though the legal drinking age is 21, people aged 12 to 20 drink 13% of all alcohol consumed in the U.S. More than 90% of that consumption is in the form of binge drinking.

*\* Binge drinking is a pattern of drinking that raises the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 g/dL. For males, this typically means consuming five or more drinks in a row; for females, this typically means consuming four or more drinks in a row—in about a two-hour time period. Binge drinking can lead to death in the form of alcohol poisoning or by suppressing the gag reflex, which puts a person at risk for choking on their own vomit.*

The widespread prevalence of underage drinking and the negative consequences it creates remain a stubborn and destructive problem despite decades of efforts to combat it. Far too many teens and parents continue to overlook just how big of a deal underage drinking is. In addition to being against the law, underage drinking is associated with



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Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free



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many tragic consequences including:

- Sexual assaults
- Unwanted pregnancies
- Highway deaths
- Drownings
- Suicides
- Injuries
- Disrupted families

Over the past two decades, scientific research has revolutionized our understanding of how alcohol and drugs affect the body and the brain. We now know that prolonged, repeated alcohol and drug use can result in fundamental, long-lasting changes in the body including brain structure and functioning. Research also indicates that alcohol use during the teenage years can interfere with normal adolescent brain development and increase the risk of developing alcohol problems later in life.

Alcohol is a drug—a powerful, mood-altering drug—and alcoholism is a chronic disease. The longer children delay drinking and drug use, the less likely they are to develop problems associated with it. It's important to help our children make smart decisions about alcohol and drug use.

We have done a great job educating youth on the risks of drinking and driving. Most every teen knows it is illegal, dangerous, and potentially deadly. However, nearly a third still accept rides from drivers who have been drinking—which means we still have work to do.

Alcohol and drug use is a very risky business for young people. Parents are the first line of defense and can make a difference. In the tip to follow, we share some ideas on keeping our teens alcohol-free, and helping them to avoid situations that place them and others in danger.

Source: [National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence: Facing Addiction with NCADD - Alcohol Awareness Month, "Help for Today, Hope for Tomorrow." April 2019.](#)