



Substance Abuse Prevention Tips for Parents

Parents are one of the most important influences when it comes to preventing youth substance use. Here are some tips to help keep your children safe and substance-free.

Talk with your kids early and often. Make sure your kids know the risks of using any substances while they're young. This applies to alcohol, illegal drugs, and medicine that is not prescribed to them. Your child's brain is still developing until the age of 25. The earlier a young person starts using drugs or alcohol, the more likely they are to develop addiction as they get older. And kids who learn about the risks of substance use from their parents are less likely to use. Start talking and keep talking.

Have a clear family policy about substance use. Make sure your kids know the policy and work together to develop reasonable consequences for breaking the rules. If your kids do break the rules, enforce the consequences calmly.

Have a clear family policy to never take medicine that is not prescribed to you. This should apply to kids and adults. The effects of medication and the risk of addiction vary greatly among different people. Never share medication or take someone else's.

Be involved in your children's lives. Go to their after-school activities. Have dinner together. Meet their teachers at school. When your kids aren't home, make sure you always know where they are and who they're with. Connect with other parents as much and as often as possible.

Know the signs of substance use and mental health issues like depression and anxiety. Get help if you suspect your child may be using alcohol or drugs (including medicine not prescribed to them), or struggling with mental health issues. Your healthcare provider or school nurse are two good places to start.

Be a good role model. Young people who see their parents drunk, using drugs, or misusing medicine are at an increased risk for developing substance abuse problems. Try to manage stress using strategies that are not related to drugs or alcohol. Instead, exercise, talk to a friend or therapist, watch something funny, do yoga, or play a game.

Don't give up. Even if you think or know that your child has already used drugs or alcohol. You still make a difference in their future choices. Regroup, talk to other parents, get some help and keep trying. Your kids are worth it.

Get more tips and information from Partnership for Drug-Free Kids at www.drugfree.org and the Opioid Task Force at www.opioidtaskforce.org.