

Strategies

for Parents to Prevent Underage Drinking

There is a good chance your teen will be exposed to alcohol during his or her school years. As a parent or guardian, you can help to prevent or delay your teen's use of alcohol.

PARENTS PLAY A KEY ROLE IN PREVENTING UNDERAGE DRINKING

Research shows there are six effective parenting strategies that can help prevent or delay alcohol use among youth. These corresponding tip sheets describe the six effective parenting strategies and provide detailed tips and activities to prevent or delay alcohol use among youth.



You can play an active role in helping your teen make healthy choices regarding alcohol use.

For more information, call 1-800-660-5853 or visit www.healthunit.org

The Six Strategies

- **Be in the Know**
Parental Monitoring
- **Parent-Child**
Communication
General Communication
- **Set Clear Expectations**
General Discipline
- **Be a Positive**
Role Model
Parental Modelling
- **Be Engaged**
Parent-Teen
Relationship Quality
- **Know the Law**
When Parents Provide
Alcohol



DID YOU KNOW?

50% of students in **grades 7 to 12** reported using alcohol in the past **12 months**.

The rate of alcohol use increases significantly with grade level. In **grade 7**, **10% of students** reported using alcohol in the past 12 months. By **grade 12**, alcohol use **rose to 74%**.

20% of students in **grades 7 to 12** reported **binge drinking** at least once during the past **four weeks**.

HARMFUL EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL ON YOUTH

Youth are at greater risk from the harmful effects of alcohol because their brains are still developing. These alcohol related harms include:



HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health website provides resources and tips for hosting a party: www.camh.ca
- Parent Action on Drugs website that provides resources to address alcohol misuse: www.parentactionondrugs.org/for-parents/
- Videos from DrinkWise Australia and booklets from Australian Drug Foundation: www.stophesupply.org.au
- Australian website providing resources with tips for hosting parties: www.alcoholthinkagain.com.au
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration: www.samhsa.gov
- Parenting Strategies: Protecting your Child's Mental Health: www.parentingstrategies.net
- Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse: www.ccsa.ca

Be in the Know

Parental Monitoring

If youth are going to drink, they tend to do it when adults are not around. Monitoring your teen's activities means knowing who they are with, what they are doing, and where they are.



TIPS FOR BEING IN THE KNOW

- Agree on a curfew and set a time when your teen is expected to be home.
- Ask whether an adult will be present when your teen is going to a friend's home.
- Have your teen check-in throughout the night and make sure they can contact you at all times.
- Know how your teen is getting home.
- Get to know your teen's friends and their parents.
- Educate your teen on the responsible use of Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of social media.
- Balance your teen's need for privacy with monitoring and adjust monitoring accordingly as your teen gets older (i.e., avoid snooping through their room and belongings).
- Ensure cell phone, computer, or other electronic devices are turned off at bedtime.
- Teach your teen to choose his or her friends wisely. Talk about the qualities your teen should look for in a friend (i.e., honesty, respect, and kindness).



ACTIVITY IDEA:

Create a Safety Plan

- Agree upon a time to pick up your teen.
- Set clear rules for calling you when plans change.
- Talk about when it's not okay to accept a ride from a friend and acceptable alternatives to getting a ride home.
- Give your teen "safety" money that is carried with them to get home if needed.
- Create a list together of "what if" questions to help you talk about and develop solutions.

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HELPFUL RESOURCES

- An interactive parenting program with personalized learning modules: www.parentingstrategies.net/alcohol/#
- A factsheet on what parents should know about monitoring their teen's activities: www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/protective/pdf/parental_monitoring_factsheet.pdf
- A website to help parents talk to their youth about the importance of media literacy: www.toosmarttostart.samhsa.gov/families/media/default.aspx



REMEMBER

- Being overly strict can cause your teen to ignore the rules and misuse alcohol.
- Balance privacy with information sharing and adjust when necessary.
- Help your teen plan and choose activities to ensure they have healthy activities to participate in.



Parent-Child Communication

General Communication

Ongoing communication with your teen allows them to share their interests and areas of concern with you.

Evidence suggests general communication with your teen is associated with delayed alcohol use and a lower level of alcohol use later in life.

TIPS TO HELP BUILD COMMUNICATION

- Plan regular one-on-one time together. Enjoy activities together such as going for a walk or playing sports.
- Eat dinner together on a regular basis. Spending quality time together promotes open communication.
- Listen to what your teen has to say—and don't interrupt when they speak.



ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Prepare for the talk.** Know key alcohol facts, and review laws related to underage drinking and impaired driving. Learn how alcohol is being addressed in your teen's curriculum. Evaluate your own behaviours and attitudes about alcohol.
- **Talk to your teen about alcohol.** Make it a conversation and ask open-ended questions. Think about your body language and tone of voice.
- **Emphasize the short-term risks associated with alcohol.** These are of greater concern to youth. Avoid scare tactics or exaggerating negative effects.
- **Discuss perceptions of alcohol.** Encourage your teen to talk about their thoughts on alcohol and help them to realize that not everyone their age is drinking. (For example, in the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, 50% of students in grades 7 to 12 reported not using alcohol in the past 12 months.)
- **Talk about how alcohol is portrayed and often glamorized in the media** (i.e., movies, TV shows, music videos, and online).
- **Talk about ways to manage peer pressure.**
- **Discuss your expectations about your teen's alcohol consumption.** Be clear and specific about your expectations.



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REMEMBER

Even if you do not understand your teen's point of view, try to be understanding. Take emotion out of the conversation and avoid being confrontational.



HELPFUL RESOURCES

- This parent resource has information on what to say to your teen and activities you can engage in to talk about alcohol and set family rules:
www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/media/underage_brochure_508final.pdf
- Conversation starters to talk to your teen about alcohol, and information on how to talk to other parents:
www.cambridgepublichealth.org/lifestyle/reality-check/RC_ResourceGuide--FINAL.pdf
- An interactive tool for parents helping them practice talking to their teen about the dangers of alcohol—create action plans, family agreement form and FAQ's your teen may have about alcohol:
<http://samhsa.gov/underagedrinking/>
- A bilingual resource for parents to help them start talking about alcohol with their teen. Tips for various teen age groups:
http://educalcool.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Guide_Parents-Enfants_English.pdf
- Common questions teens ask and answers:
<http://parentactionpack.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/PAD-Questions-Teens-Ask-2013.pdf>
- Tips on talking and active listening with your teen:
<http://www.drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Quiz-Talking-and-Active-Listening-With-Your-Teen-2014.pdf>

Set Clear Expectations

General Discipline

Setting clear expectations helps create an environment where rules are respected.



TIPS WHEN SETTING CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

- Involve your teen in the development of rules and consequences.
- Ensure you and your teen have a clear understanding of what is expected.
- Be consistent when delivering consequences.
- Remain calm when enforcing consequences if rules are broken.
- Get help if your teen consistently breaks the rules.

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ACTIVITY IDEA: DEVELOP FAMILY RULES WITH YOUR TEEN

Work Together

- Base rules and consequences on age, the seriousness of the situation, and your teen's personality.
- Listen to your teen's views and discuss options.
- Write rules in a positive way. Focus on what the teen should do, rather than what they should not do.
- Negotiate changes to the rules.
- Ensure rules are clear, simple, and specific.
- Create a list of appropriate consequences with your teen. Small consequences are best, such as less screen time (e.g., TV, computer, and phone), or no friends over for a specific period of time.
- Set rules around alcohol use before a teen is exposed to a situation involving alcohol.

Be Consistent

- Administer fair and consistent discipline.
- Follow through right away on consequences. If you do not follow through, you send the message that your rules are not important and it is okay for them to be broken.
- Remain calm when enforcing consequences if rules are broken.
- Always offer encouragement when rules are followed!

Seek Support

- Seek support from someone you and your teen look up to, such as a friend, family member, faith leader, or counsellor if you need further support or guidance on setting rules and consequences.





REMEMBER

- Testing limits is a natural part of growing up.
- Regardless of your parenting style, youth who are aware their parents would be upset with them if they drank, are less likely to drink.
- Encourage independence while setting realistic limits.



HELPFUL RESOURCES

- A website with general rules for disciplining your teen:
www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/General-Rules-for-Disciplining-Teens.aspx
- A website with effective discipline strategies for children:
http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/discipline_teenagers.html

Be a Positive Role Model

Parental Modelling

How much and when a parent chooses to drink alcohol may affect their teen's decisions about drinking alcohol. Youth learn behaviours by observing adult role models.



TIPS ON POSITIVE ROLE MODELLING

- Avoid getting drunk in front of your teen.
- Choose to say 'no' when alcohol is offered to you, especially when your teen is around.
- Show your teen you and others can have a good time without alcohol.
- Make food and non-alcoholic drinks available to all guests when alcohol is available to guests 19 years of age and over.
- Let your family and close friends know about the values you are teaching your teen and ask them to model responsible behaviour.
- Avoid telling stories where alcohol is portrayed as "fun" or "glamorous".
- Avoid using alcohol as a way to cope with stress. Model healthy stress management strategies, such as going for a walk or playing basketball after a busy day. Invite your teen to join and have everyone describe one positive thing that happened in their day.
- After a stressful day, avoid making statements such as, "What a day! I need a drink!" or "A drink will calm my nerves".



ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Explore your own values and beliefs about alcohol and underage drinking.
- Think about how and when you currently use alcohol.
- Think about how you want to model responsible drinking to your teen.
- When an actor/actress in a movie or TV show uses alcohol to help them relax, engage your teen in a conversation about healthy, non-alcoholic ways to reduce stress and relax.

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LEAD BY EXAMPLE

As an adult, if you choose to drink, limit your use of alcohol according to Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines.

These limits include 10 drinks a week, with no more than 2 drinks a day for women, and 15 drinks a week with no more than 3 drinks a day for men.

Do not drink alcohol if you are:

- Driving a vehicle or using machinery and tools.
- Taking medicine that interacts with alcohol.
- Doing any kind of dangerous physical activity.
- Living with mental or physical health problems.
- Living with alcohol dependence.
- Pregnant or planning to be pregnant.
- Responsible for the safety of others.
- Making important decisions.



REMEMBER

It's never too late to change! If you want to change the messages you are sending your teen about alcohol, you can. Talk to your teen about why you are making changes and welcome their questions.

HOW MUCH IS ONE DRINK?



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HELPFUL RESOURCES

- General information on Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines:
www.ccsa.ca
- Tips on being a good role model for your teen from Drinkwise, Australia:
www.drinkwise.org.au/parents/how-to-be-a-good-role-model/
- A resource to help prevent alcohol related problems in your family:
www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/for_parents/Pages/takeaction_alcohol_drugs.aspx
- An interactive parenting program with personalized learning modules:
www.parentingstrategies.net/alcohol/#

Be Engaged

Parent-Teen Relationship Quality

A supportive parent-teen relationship, characterized by closeness and caring, can help delay when youth first try alcohol and lower their chances of developing a habit later in life.



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or visit www.healthunit.org



TIPS TO HELP IMPROVE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR TEEN

- Support your teen to find their passions and interests. Help them find their “spark” in life.
- Be involved in your teen’s day-to-day life. Participate in activities that interest your teen.
- Remind your teen you love them on a regular basis. Praise them for good behaviour, their efforts and achievements.
- Be consistent and follow through with agreements.
- Show you care. Be warm but firm with your teen.
- Encourage your teen to discuss problems and concerns with you.
- Build your teen’s self-confidence. Youth who face each day with confidence and a positive attitude are more likely to make healthy choices.



ACTIVITY IDEA: HELP YOUR TEEN FIND THEIR “SPARK”

- **Have a conversation:** talk to your teen about activities that bring joy and energy into their life.
- **Observe:** notice times when they are having fun and enjoying life by engaging in specific activities.
- **Explore:** encourage your teen to try at least one new activity or pursue a new interest. Help them to identify and explore it.
- **Make time:** take the opportunity for quality one-on-one time with your teen as you share an interest in their new “spark”.

EXAMPLES OF SPARKS

Festivals



Exercise



Sports



Cooking



Music



Movies



REMEMBER

- Warmth, bonding, and affection are all qualities of a positive parent–teen relationship.
- Talking openly and honestly with your teen is the root of a good relationship.
- Eating together as a family sets the stage for good conversations and sharing.



HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Tip sheets for parents to help their youth find passions and interests in their lives: www.stepitup2thrive.org/sparks/introduction/
- An interactive parenting program with personalized learning modules: www.parentingstrategies.net/alcohol/#
- A scale for parents to use and assess the quality of their parent-teen relationship: www.performwell.org/index.php/find-surveyassessments/outcomes/relationships/parent-teen-relationships/positive-relationship-with-parents-scale-for-parents
- Sample text messages to help your teen avoid alcohol: <http://didyouknowfacts.net/files/Text-Messages-to-Avoid-Alcohol.pdf>

Know the Law

When Parents Provide Alcohol



In Ontario, it is illegal to drink alcohol under the age of 19. When parents make alcohol available for underage youth, they put them at risk for alcohol-related harm. They also put themselves and the youth at legal risk.



TIPS TO HELP DELAY ALCOHOL USE

- Talk to your partner and establish consistent messages about underage drinking of alcohol in your home.
- Discuss with your teen your responsibility as a parent to protect them from alcohol-related incidents and to follow the law.
- Inform your teen that persons under 19 years of age who are found to possess, to have used, or to have bought or attempted to buy alcohol are committing an offence under the Liquor Licence Act. This can result in a large fine.
- Establish rules and expectations with your teen for parties in your home.



ACTIVITY IDEA

Plan a Party with Your Teen

Before the Party

- **Talk to your teen about having an alcohol-free party.** Discuss the possible consequences of having alcohol at their party.
- **Plan the party with your teen.** Talk with your teen and take their views into consideration. Discuss the number of guests, budget for food, non-alcoholic drinks, decorations, activities, and rooms that will be out-of-bounds during the party. Be clear about your expectations for your teen and their guests.
- **Know who will be attending the party.** Don't advertise the party on social media (i.e., Facebook or Twitter).

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ACTIVITY IDEA (continued)

During the Party

- Provide a safe environment. You are responsible for properly supervising the party.
- Provide and monitor non-alcoholic drinks.
- Provide plenty of healthy food and try to avoid salty snacks.
- Move in and out of party rooms and restock food to keep an eye on the party. Pay attention to guest behaviour and appearance.
- Check in with your teen throughout the party to ensure everything is okay.
- Ensure everyone has a safe ride home.



REMEMBER

As a parent, you are legally responsible for what goes on in your house. This applies even if you are not present, you do not know your guests are drinking, or your guests brought their own alcohol.



HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Parent Action on Drugs' website has resources to address alcohol misuse: www.parentactionondrugs.org/for-parents/
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health website provides resources and tips for hosting a party: www.camh.ca
- Videos from DrinkWise Australia and booklets from Australian Drug Foundation provide tips for hosting a party: www.stopthesupply.org.au
- Alcohol Think Again (Australian) provides resources and tips for hosting a party: www.alcoholthinkagain.com.au

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