

As children approach adolescence they are finding out who they are, what they believe in, what they want to accomplish, and how they view themselves and others. As a parent, guardian, or adult ally you can have a huge impact through this discovery.



## Key strategies to help prevent or delay children and youth from using substances, like alcohol, e-cigarettes, tobacco and cannabis:

**1 Be a positive role model.** Be the kind of adult you want children to become. Reflect on your own opinions and values about substances.

- Think about what you do and say. Rethink statements like, “What a day, I need a drink”.
- Take care of yourself. You can model healthy ways to cope with stress such as going for a walk, talking about problems, and focusing on the positive things that happened during the day.

**2 Be engaged.** Look for opportunities to connect with children and youth.

- Take an interest in their activities and help them to pursue their passions.
- Find activities that you can do together.
- Be supportive and praise them for their positive choices and accomplishments. For example: “Thank you for calling me for a ride home.”

**3 Talk early and often.** From an early age, have conversations about anything and everything. Be open-minded and curious.

- Consider talking when you’re both calm and relaxed. Try situations where you can talk side by side such as in the car, while going for a walk, or when sitting beside each other.
- Ask open ended questions like: “How do you feel about...?” “What worries you about...?”

**4 Create realistic expectations.** Find the right balance between using authority and using discussion and negotiation.

- Include children and youth in setting the rules and consequences; they are more likely to follow rules if they were involved in making them.
- When rules are broken, follow through on the consequences.
- Be clear about the expectations that are not up for discussion.

**5 Stay connected.** Know where children and youth are, who they are with, and what they are doing.

- Get to know the other important people in their lives.
- Balance and adjust monitoring with their growing independence.
- Educate them on responsible use of social media.

**6 Know the facts.** Be prepared when you talk.

- Know the law such as age limits, driving restrictions, and permitted places of use.
- Know the myths and facts related to substance use. Look for reliable resources together such as on your local public health units’ website: [www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org).

### For more information on how to talk to children and youth about substances, check out:

- [Cannabis: What Parents/Guardians and Caregivers Need to Know](#), accessible at [www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca)
- [Talking Pot with Youth](#), accessible at [www.ccsa.ca](http://www.ccsa.ca)

### Where to go for help:

- <https://healthunit.org/health-information/alcohol-other-drugs/where-to-go-for-help/>
- [Triple P: www.triplep-parenting.ca](http://www.triplep-parenting.ca)