



GET READY TO TALK!

Some simple steps towards preventing
drug and alcohol use by your child.

**DRUG
FREE
KIDS**
CANADA.ORG



Drug Free Kids Canada Where families come for help

WHY it's important to talk with your kids about drugs.

- 90% of addictions begin in adolescence.¹
- 60% of illicit substance users are between 15 and 24 years old.²
- The rate of cannabis use is two times higher among Canadian youth aged 15 -24 as it is for adults.³
- Canada is second only to the US in consumption of prescription opioids.⁴
- One in 10 Canadian teenagers admit to having taken a legal prescription drug in the past year to get high and 55% of those kids say they took them from home.⁵
- More young drivers aged 15 - 24 admitted to driving after taking cannabis than driving after drinking alcohol and 1 in 3 youth have been a passenger with cannabis impaired driver.⁶
- Drivers aged between 16-24 account for the most driver fatalities involving drugs or alcohol.⁷

WHEN to talk about drugs?

Lots of parents wonder how old their child should be before starting a conversation.

START EARLY

The onset of adolescence often brings major emotional, physical and psychological changes in your children, often resulting in behaviours that at times can be challenging for you as a parent. In short, they are finding their way, but you the parent should be involved.

Today's pre-teens and teens are exposed to so much more in contemporary culture; they are constantly bombarded with adult issues like drugs, drinking and sex. It may seem to you that they are growing up much faster than you did, with a greater need for parental guidance and love.

Pressures around school, dating and friendships become more important to them than ever before. All these changes your child experiences will powerfully affect your role as a parent.

Your kids need to hear from you that substance use by pre-teens or teens is not accepted in your family. Most importantly, they need to be held accountable for their actions with drugs and alcohol use.

HOW to talk about drugs?

It's not an easy topic to discuss – Here are some ways to get yourself ready for that conversation with your kid.

GET EDUCATED

Take the time to learn the facts about underage consumption of cannabis, alcohol and other substances – the negative effects that these substances can have on the mental health, social interactions and learning of young users.

HAVE A PLAN

Go for a walk; sit where you can't be disturbed, and think. Organize your thoughts. Decide what you want to say to your teen. Find resources that can help, like the DFK website.

BE FLEXIBLE... ABOUT WHEN YOU TALK, NOT ABOUT WHETHER YOU TALK

Control can be a huge issue for pre-teens and teens. Sometimes parents provoke unnecessary conflict by demanding conversations be on their terms. It's best to try to engage your teen in dialogue by respecting his or her preferences about when to talk. If he or she doesn't want to talk now, show respect by being flexible—within reason.

MAKE IT SAFE

Teens may become defensive during your crucial conversations less because of what you're saying than because of why they think you're saying it. Remind your teen of your support.

The conversation has begun... now what?

ACTIVELY LISTEN

After presenting the facts as you see them, ask your teen about what he or she knows about drugs and where they may have been exposed to them, what they did. Listen to your pre-teen or teen. Hear what he or she is saying.

DISCUSS

The next step is to discuss the shared information. This may be difficult, as the tendency may be for your teen to respond defensively or in anger. Be steady and consistent in your approach. Don't get lulled into "looking the other way" because it's easier. Know that you are doing the right thing.

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Determine a time when you and your teen will have the next talk. Talking to your kids about drugs should be a continuous process—not a singular event.

EVALUATE THE DIALOGUE

You're aiming for a two-way, face-to-face conversation that gives your teen room to disagree with you and communicate a different point of view. After the conversation, ask yourself who did most of the talking. If your teen didn't do at least 25 percent of it, you didn't ask enough questions—or you didn't create enough safety to allow your teen to participate fully. If that's the case, try again keeping in mind that you want your teen to feel they were heard.

BUILD YOUR COMMUNITY

Get to know your teen's friends (and their parents) by inviting them over for dinner or talking with them at your teen's soccer practice, dance rehearsal, or other activities. Get to know their teachers, coaches, and other adults who interact with your child and have them let you know of any changes in your teen's behaviour.



Strategies to help your kid say “No”

Many kids are actually stressed about what to do if a friend or a classmate offers them drugs at school. As parents we can equip our kids with the tools to say “No” and protect themselves.


Together, you and your teen can work on strategies to help them to get out of an uncomfortable situation involving drugs, enabling them to say No with confidence and courage.

Discuss with your teen:

- If you find yourself in a problem situation, make an excuse to leave.
- Ask for support from other friends or adults if someone is really pressuring you to use drugs.
- Make new friends who respect your decision not to use drugs.
- Go to events that don’t involve drugs. Don’t put yourself in an unsafe or difficult situation.

Together, you can discuss and practice some things your teen might feel comfortable saying:

- I can’t stay; I’ve got to help my dad with something.
- That stuff makes me sick.
- I’m supposed to meet so and so in a few minutes.
- I’m not into that.
- I don’t have time for drugs.
- I’d be suspended from the team.
- Forget it. There’s no way I’m going to do drugs.
- I’ve got more to do with my life.



Whenever you decide to talk about drugs with your pre-teen or teen, it's important to remind your child that their body and their future belong to them - and that you are always there to talk with them about any issues or concerns they might have.

Have questions about kids and drug use?
Get answers quickly.

The **DFK FastFinder** makes it easy to find the information and resources you're looking for.

For more information on drugs, their effects on youth, how to intervene if your child is using, and how you, as the parent can protect your child from harm, please go to our website:

drugfreekidscanada.org