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# PARENTS

As a parent or caregiver, you play a vital role in influencing your child's attitudes and behaviors. You serve as a role model on the use of alcohol, control the availability of alcohol in your home, and help set your child's expectations concerning drinking behaviors. A recent study shows that children whose parents are involved in their lives — hold regular conversations, attend after-school events, and listen to their problems — are less likely to drink or smoke.

In this section you will find warning signs of a drinking problem, questions to ask yourself about your child and community, prevention strategies parents can take, and resources for effective parenting, which include both useful publications and helpful organizations.

### Warning Signs of Childhood Drinking

While the following behaviors may indicate an alcohol or other drug problem, some also reflect normal teenage growing pains. Experts believe that a drinking problem is more likely if you notice several of these signs at the same time, if they occur suddenly, and if some of them are extreme in nature.

- Mood changes: flare-ups of temper, irritability, and defensiveness
- School problems: poor attendance, low grades, and/or recent disciplinary action
- Rebelling against family rules
- Switching friends, along with a reluctance to have you get to know the new friends
- A "nothing matters" attitude: sloppy appearance, a lack of involvement in former interests, and general low energy
- Finding alcohol in your child's room or backpack, or smelling alcohol on his or her breath
- Physical or mental problems: memory lapses, poor concentration, bloodshot eyes, lack of coordination, or slurred speech

As a parent or caregiver, ask yourself these questions:

- Do you know how to discuss alcohol use with your child and where to get helpful information?
- Do you know your child's friends, and do you feel that they provide positive influences on your child's activities?
- Do you know the legal consequences of underage drinking?
- Do you know your State's laws about providing alcohol to anyone under 21?

Prevention Strategies

## LEADERSHIP READS

The Leadership Reads Initiative is a nationwide endeavor to facilitate parents' learning about several techniques to minimize the risk of their children using alcohol and other drugs. [Click here](#) to download the discussion guide on alcohol as a deterrent to health, success, and well-being based on the book, *Messengers in Denim*.



- [Prevent underage alcohol access in the home](#). Learn about social host liability laws.
- [Regulate home delivery](#). Some jurisdictions may choose to forbid or restrict home delivery of alcohol to prevent unsupervised alcohol sales.
- Learn about the effects of alcohol. [How Does Alcohol Affect the World of a Child?](#) is a statistical brochure for lay audiences which summarizes the most current research findings about early alcohol use and its effects. Available in English and Spanish. (The Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free initiative)
- [Talk to your Child. Make A Difference: Talk to Your Child About Alcohol](#), is a guide for parents and guardians of young people ages 10 to 14. It describes the problems associated with alcohol use among young people, as well as the way parents can talk with children about these issues. (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, Revised 2006)

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In the home, take these steps:

- Set a good example for your children regarding the use of alcohol.
- Encourage your children to talk with you about their problems and concerns.
- Get to know your children's friends and discuss ways your children can avoid drinking when they are feeling pressured by peers.
- Talk to other parents about ways to send a consistent, clear message that underage drinking is not acceptable behavior or a "rite of passage."
- Encourage your children to participate in supervised activities and events that are challenging, fun, and alcohol free.
- Learn the warning signs that indicate your children may be drinking and act promptly to get help.
- Make sure you're at home for all your children's parties and be sure those parties are alcohol free.

