



Drugs and Alcohol Information

Get informed, stay smart, stay safe

How parents can protect against drug use and related harms



Evidence ratings:

This resource has undergone expert review. See our [Help/Q&A section](#) for more details.

Year:

Targeted Drugs: Alcohol, Drugs (General)

Tags:

Origin: Australian

Cost:

Free

What can parents do?

As a parent or guardian, you have a big impact on a teenager's life and the decisions they make. Research has shown there are many ways in which parents can minimise the chances that an adolescent will use illegal drugs, or experience harms from their use.

1. Be a good role model

Your behaviour and attitude towards alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs have a big influence on your child's behaviour, so it is important to set a good example. Avoid contradictions between what you tell them and what you do, and try to demonstrate ways to have fun and deal with problems that don't involve drugs or alcohol.

2. Be involved in their lives

Be sure to regularly spend time with your child where you can give them your undivided attention; you could set up a routine of having meals together or helping them with their homework. Get involved and show an interest in their hobbies and activities. Have internet access in a central area in the house. If they go out, ask them about where they are going and who they are going with and make this discussion a regular part of your conversation. Knowing who your child is with and where they are, can help reduce risk.

Peer influence can affect your child's behaviour, so it is natural to want to help your child choose the right friends and to get to know them. Invite them to your house, or talk to them if you pick your child up from school or after school activities. Get to know their parents as well, as they can provide a support network to look out for the safety of your children. If you have good reason to believe your child's friends are involved in drugs, be prepared to support your child to find a new set of friends by engaging them in some new activities.

3. Establish and maintain good communication

Let your child know that you are always ready and willing to talk and listen. Ask open-ended questions and encourage them to share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions to show you value what they think. This will encourage them to be honest and not just say what they think you want to hear. When talking to them try not to lecture them, it is important to listen to their thoughts and concerns and offer help and support. Try and make yourself somehow available most of the time. For example, make sure your child can contact you easily if they are at a party.

See also:

- [Talking to a young person about illegal drugs](#)
- [Helping someone who has taken an illegal drug](#)
- [Parenting Guidelines for Adolescent Alcohol Use](#)

Evidence Base

This factsheet was developed following expert review by researchers at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, The University of Sydney (formerly the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use), National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW and the National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University. See [Parent booklet](#) for more information.

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