



Ensuring your teenager stays safe when they're attending a party



Evidence ratings:



This resource has undergone expert review. See our Help/Q&A section for more details.

Year: Year 7–8, Year 9–10, Year 11–12

Targeted Drugs: Alcohol, Drugs (General)

Tags: party, parties, celebration, event

Origin: Australian

Cost:

Free

Key Messages

- Make time to talk with your teenager about the party.
- Speak to the parents who are hosting the party to confirm details with them.
- During the party, keep your mobile phone on you in case your child or the hosts need to contact you.

If your teenager is invited to a party, arrange a time with them to discuss the issues relating to the party. It's also a good idea to contact the parents who are hosting the party, to confirm details and provide your phone number. Click on the topics below for discussion points and information.

To discuss with your teenager

The Alcohol issue

As your teen gets older, alcohol is more likely to be part of social events and parties. Ideally, parents should try to have a conversation about alcohol before their child has been exposed to it. Being invited to a party can be a good time to start this conversation with your child.

It's important to talk to your teenager about the harms related to alcohol use. Positive Choices has many resources to help you with this. Read our alcohol factsheet, watch our webinar, or ask your child to watch this 5-minute video about the effects of alcohol on the teenage brain.

Let your teenager know your expectations around their use of alcohol. Setting clear rules can help to delay your teenager from starting to drink alcohol and prevent alcohol-related harms. Providing alcohol for your adolescent to take to a party is not recommended. This conveys a positive attitude to alcohol, which increases the likelihood of teenagers starting to use alcohol at an earlier age, as well as having higher levels of alcohol use.

If you think your teenager will be drinking alcohol, talk to them about how they can reduce the risk of harm. This can include reminders to:

- never drive or get in a car with a driver who has been drinking
- stay with their friends and don't wander off alone
- don't get involved in activities like swimming, riding a bike and other physical sports.

Dealing with peer pressure

Talk to your teenager about what to do if they are faced with peer pressure to drink alcohol or take drugs. It might help to remind them that the majority of teenagers do not use alcohol or drugs. Only 36% of 17-year-olds are "current drinkers". You can also let them know how many young people in Australia use alcohol or other drugs, to show them that by not using drugs they are part of the majority of young Australians.

See our factsheet making choices to help your teenager think about situations they may face where they have to deal with peer pressure, and some strategies to do this successfully. They can also watch this 2-minute video on how to say no without losing face.

What to do if something goes wrong

It's important your teenager has some knowledge of what to do if something goes wrong. In particular, will they know when to get help from an adult or even call an ambulance, and what to do if they have to wait for help to arrive? Some tips to help prepare your teenager include:

- repeating safety messages to them before every party. This should be simple, such as instructions to call you or an ambulance if something goes wrong.
- let them know they will not get in trouble if they need help. Make sure to keep your mobile phone on you while your child is at the party.
- remind your teenager that there will be adult supervision, and they should talk to a supervising adult if anything goes wrong.
- remind them that situations can get out of control quickly and that it is best to involve an adult as soon as they feel there might be a problem.
- ask them to look after their friends at a party, especially if there will be alcohol. Ideally, having one person from each friendship group stay sober means there will be someone who can properly look out for others. Ask your teenager to read our factsheet on how to put someone in the recovery position in case one of their friends is unconscious and they need to wait for help to arrive.

To discuss with the hosting parents

It's a good idea to contact the hosting parents to confirm some details about the party. These can include anything you are concerned about, but some recommended questions are below.

Will there be alcohol at the party?

If the answer is yes, let the parents know whether your teenager will still be attending the party and whether or not you give permission for your teenager to drink alcohol.

What supervision will be provided?

Ask the hosting parents about their plan for supervising the party, such as how many adults will be there. Make sure you are satisfied with this level of supervision. If you can help supervise, offer this to the parents.

What time will the party start and finish?

Ask the hosts for a clear start and end time. This will help you monitor transport to and from the party and know where your teenager is if you are not taking them yourself. Plan with your teenager how they will get home after the party, and make sure they have a safe option.

Exchange contact numbers

Save the phone number of the hosting parents in case you need to contact them during the party and ask them to save your number as well.

Evidence Base

This factsheet was developed following expert review by researchers at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of Sydney, the National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, and Dr Catherine Quinn at the University of Queensland.