



**Saint Alphonsus
Health System**

Substance Abuse

Parent - Family Newsletter



October 2010

7 Ways to Keep Your Kids Away From Drugs and Alcohol

In the past decade, the United States has experienced a “good news trend” concerning teen substance abuse. According to Tom Hedrick of the Partnership for a Drug Free America, the nation has seen a significant reduction in the number of teens who regularly smoke cigarettes, those who start drinking alcohol at an early age and kids who use drugs across the board. But new data show these trends are beginning to reverse.



Almost 1 in 10 people aged 12 to 20 meets the criteria for a diagnosable alcohol use disorder, according to the most recent National Survey of Drug Use and Health. The survey also showed that a significant increase in the use of illegal drugs like marijuana and ecstasy occurred for 12 to 17 year olds between 2008 and 2009. And perhaps most disturbing, a new threat of prescription medicine abuse is continuously increasing, due to easy access and a low level of perceived harm.

Hedrick believes parents have a large role to play in keeping teens

substance-free. He says when parents are involved, prevention usually works: “When kids learn about the risks of drugs from their parents, this child is 50 percent less likely to be involved with drugs,” he says.

Follow our action plan below to keep your kids away from drugs and alcohol.

1. Talk early and often with your child: It's never too early to talk to your child about your personal beliefs and expectations. Share information about substance abuse's effects on the brain and body, as well as laws governing drugs and alcohol. Don't just lecture them once and then forget about it. Carry on an ongoing conversation that takes advantage of teachable moments in non-crisis times.

2. Get involved with their interests and values: Encourage positive hobbies that keep them active, healthy and focused on goals.

3. Be a good role model: Want your kids to stay away from drugs and alcohol? Be a good role model and stay away from illegal,

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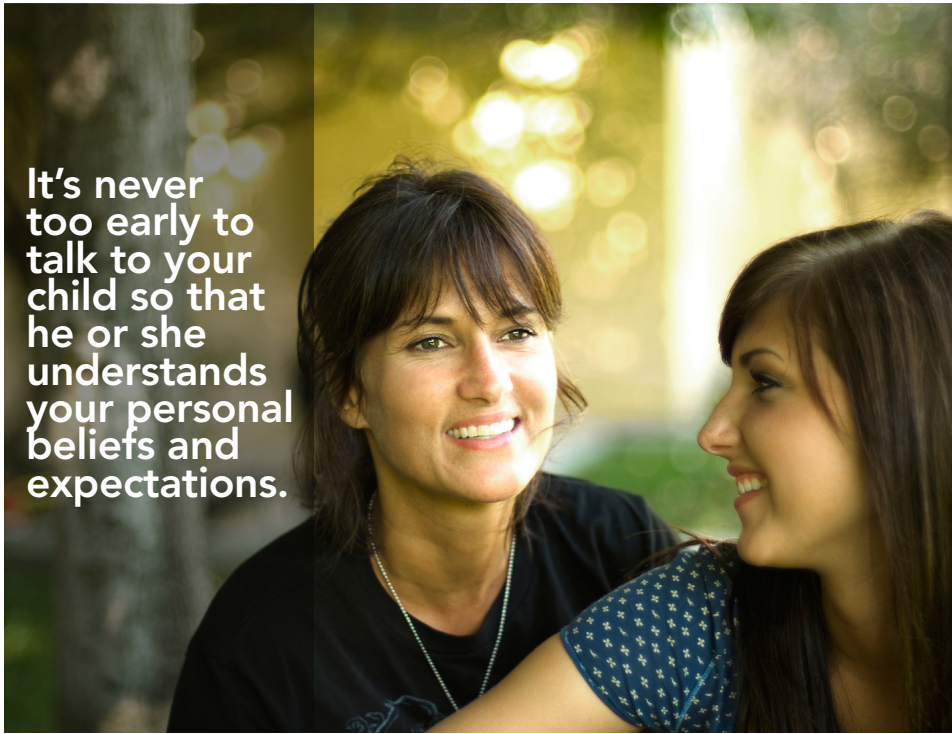
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WHEN TO START TALKING ABOUT DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

The Partnership for a Drug Free America says efforts for prevention should ramp up at the end of elementary school—the average age of first use of drugs and alcohol is between 12 and 14. Over the last three years, new neuroscience research has also proven that the brain is not fully developed until a person is between 22 and 24, and the chemical development of the brain also makes younger ages more susceptible to drug and alcohol dependence and addiction.



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It's never too early to talk to your child so that he or she understands your personal beliefs and expectations.

unhealthy or dangerous practices. Explain your reasons for drinking responsibly and in moderation. If you don't drink, explain why, whether it is health-related or something else.

4. Teach kids to choose friends wisely: Encourage positive relationships in your child's life that will help him or her make healthy choices.

5. Monitor your kids' activities and know where they are: It is easier to make unwise choices without positive supervision. Know where your kids spends the majority of their free time and set boundaries on activities not supervised by adults.

6. Set clear, sensible rules for your child and enforce them with consistency: Be specific, consistent and reasonable, and always reward good behavior.

7. Keep communication lines open: Remind your kids that they should never be afraid to tell you anything and that you are always there to help without judgment. Sometimes it may be better to establish a surrogate figure to fulfill this role. Another family member or trusted friend who has your child's best interest in mind could be a positive figure that your child could go to if necessary.

A Rising Threat: Prescription Medications

Here's a shocking statistic: One out of 5 adolescents reports having abused prescription medication. "We urge parents that this behavior is rampant," says Tom Hedrick of the Partnership for a Drug Free America. "More 12 and 13 year olds are abusing these for the first time than they are trying marijuana. Because prescription drugs can be found in a typical household medicine cabinet, there is a misconception among teenagers that these drugs are safer. The truth is they can be just as dangerous, addictive and deadly as street drugs." What are the main drugs to learn about and keep away from your child?

- Pain medications, such as Lortab and Percocet
- Sedatives and tranquilizers, like Xanax and Valium
- Prescription stimulants, like Adderall and Ritalin
- Over-the-counter cough suppressant, DXM