



## SAFELY COMMUNICATING ABOUT DRUG USE

Research shows the earlier children begin using alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs, the more likely they are to experience serious problems. The average age kids try drugs for the first time is 13. Eight out of 10 teens who use prescriptions say they got them from friends or family.

Youth who learn about the risks of drugs from their parents are up to 50% less likely to use.

Effective prevention starts with an honest conversation. Stay involved. Talk with your loved ones about substance use today. Helping young people develop healthy coping skills is smart prevention.

Keeping drugs away from children as long as possible is best.

### Parents are the #1 reason children do not use alcohol or drugs

- **Start talking early and regularly with children.** “Upsetting or disappointing my parents” is the top reason youth give on why they won’t drink alcohol or use substances. Start at an early age and keep the lines of communication open.
- **Lots of little talks are more effective than one “big talk.”** Sitting down for the “big talk” about alcohol can be intimidating for both you and your child. Try using everyday opportunities to talk – in the car, during dinner, or while you and your child are watching TV. Having lots of little talks takes the pressure off trying to get all of the information out in one lengthy discussion.
- **Set clear family rules.** As you continue to talk with children as they grow, be sure you’ve established clear family rules about alcohol and substance use. Follow through when the rules are broken. Intervene early if use is suspected and enforce consequences.
- **Scare tactics don’t work.** Strategies based on fear are not an effective approach to prevention. More than 60 years of studies show fear-based approaches don’t work and can increase problem behavior.
- **Do not talk about drugs in a positive manner.** If you take a painkiller or other addictive prescription drug, do so discreetly. Be careful not to make remarks indicating how much better you feel since you have taken the drug or how good it makes you feel.
- **Be a good role model and set a good example.** Do not make drinking the sole focus of social gatherings when children are present. It is never okay to ask a child to get a beer or alcoholic drink for you.
- **Safeguard your family’s medicines.** Keep prescription medication in a secure place, count and monitor the number of pills you have. Safely dispose of unwanted or expired medicine at a drug collection site near you.

*See reverse side for talking point suggestions.*





## Talking Points

- Anyone can become addicted to drugs and alcohol. Addiction can occur just as easily with prescription drugs as it does with street drugs. Prescription drugs are not safe alternatives. People often think prescription and over-the-counter drugs are safer than illicit drugs. They can be as addictive and dangerous and put users at risk for other adverse health effects, including overdose – especially when taken with other drugs or alcohol.
- Help youth deal with peer pressure and practice saying “no.” Rehearse specific social situations with your youth in which friends offer drugs. Have them develop and practice comfortable ways to refuse the offer.
- Decide together on the consequences if family rules are broken regarding alcohol and drug use and follow through when consequences are needed.
- Discuss your family history of addiction, if any, and let your children know they are 4 times more likely to become addicted if it runs in the family.
- Never share prescription medication. Explain the idea of addiction. Abusing drugs can cause brain disease to develop.
- Take advantage of teachable moments.
- List the behaviors you’ve observed, state that you are worried about the effect drinking or drug use is having, and express concern about continued use.
- Create a two-way dialogue so the person doesn’t feel lectured or badgered and use open-ended questions.

Source: [starkcountymhar.org](http://starkcountymhar.org)

