



Prevention

Misuse of drugs and alcohol can cause overdoses, accidents, life problems, health problems, and death.

Using drugs that are illegal or misusing prescription drugs keeps people from having healthy, happy lives. Drugs can hurt your relationships and your ability to work.

Treatment works. It helps people recover from addiction. It's better for people to get help early, before their drug problem gets worse. More and more general doctors are trained to spot signs of a possible drug problem early and speak with the patient about it.

But the best protection from the dangers of drugs is to not start in the first place. Parents should watch their kids closely. Even if you think you have the type of kid that wouldn't try drugs, pressure from other kids can be hard to resist.

What can you do?

Know the facts about drugs and addiction:

- Visit the Easy-to-Read Drug Facts webpages [Drugs That People Use and Misuse](#) and [What is an addiction?](#)

Talk with your children:

- Read "[Help Children and Teens Stay Drug-Free](#)" to learn more.

Keep your home safe:

- Put your medicines in a safe place so that others can't take them. You might want to lock them somewhere.
- [Get rid of medicines when you don't need them anymore](#). You can take them to your local "[drug take back](#)" event. You can also throw some medicines in your trash by mixing the drugs with things like dirt, cat litter, or used coffee grounds or flush them down the toilet.
- Keep track of cleaners, spray cans, and other stuff in the house that people can inhale to get high.



Help Children and Teens Stay Drug-Free

Kids hear about drugs everywhere: in music, movies, the news, and on TV. They hear about it online, in things like YouTube videos, or on apps like Instagram or Snapchat. They might see people doing drugs on the street or even in their own home. They might hear other kids talking about it at school, parties, or even on the playground. The teen years are the most likely time for someone to try drugs, and that can lead to drug problems when they grow up.



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There are many things you can do to help your children stay away from drugs and make good choices:

- **Talk with your children about drugs before they are teens.**

Explain why taking drugs can hurt their health, their friends and family, and their future. Tell them you don't want them to take drugs that they aren't supposed to. You can also share the websites found in the [Drug Use Prevention Phone Numbers and Websites](#) section. Repeat these messages during their teen years.

- **Text your teen.**

Send positive text messages to your teen. Or send a text after you have a conversation that reminds them of your talk. You don't have to worry about popular texting language. Just write the way you talk. Tell them you are proud of them.

- **Be a part of their lives.**

Spend time together. Even when times are hard, kids can make it when they know that the adults in their life care about them. Give your child your full attention. Turn off your TV, cell phone, or computer, and really listen.

- **Know where your children are and what they're doing.**

Keeping track of your children helps you protect them. It gives them fewer chances to get into drugs.

- **Set clear rules and enforce them fairly.**

Kids need rules they can count on. That is how they learn for themselves what is safe and what can get them in trouble. Explain why you are setting a rule so they understand why it matters.

- **Be a good example for your children.**

You might not think so, but kids look up to their parents. Show them how you get along with people and deal with stress. This can teach them how to do it.

- **Make your home safe.**

Know the people you have in the house. Try not to have people over who misuse drugs and alcohol. Keep track of medicines and cleaning products you have in the house.

For more advice, visit:

- [Family Checkup](#) on the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) website
- [Talk to Your Kids About Tobacco, Alcohol, and Drugs](#) from [healthfinder.gov](#)

Talking to Kids about Drugs: What to Say if You Used Drugs in the Past

If you misused drugs at some time in your life, it might feel hard to tell your kids not to misuse drugs. Everyone handles this problem differently.

If you choose to tell your kids about your past:

- Don't give a lot of details about your past drug use.
- Point out the problems your drug use might have caused. For example, are there things you don't remember because you were on drugs? Did you fight with friends or family because of drugs? Did drug use keep you from saving money, getting better grades, or getting a better job?
- Explain why you wouldn't use drugs now. Tell them that we now know more about the bad effects of drugs, especially how drugs can hurt the brain.
- Say that you want your kids to avoid making the same mistakes you made.
- Be open to responses that your kids may have to your past drug use.

Parents who used to take drugs often don't talk with their kids about drugs at all. They're afraid the kids will copy what they did. But research shows that:

- When parents tell their kids they don't want them to do drugs, the kids are less likely to do drugs.
- Kids want their parents' advice about drugs.

Drug Use Prevention Phone Numbers and Websites

You can find more information on preventing drug use.

By phone:

National Helpline

Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Toll-Free 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Federal resources on the web:

- [Family Checkup](#) (from [NIDA](#))
- [Underage Drinking Prevention: Talk. They Hear You](#) (from the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA))
- [Prevention of Substance Abuse and Mental Illness](#) (SAMHSA)
- [Organizations and Places to Turn to for Assistance](#) (SAMHSA)
- [Alcohol Use: Conversation Starters](#) (from [healthfinder.gov](#))

Federal websites for teens:

- [NIDA for Teens](#)
- [Above the Influence](#) (Partnership for Drug-Free Kids)
- [The Cool Spot](#)
- [Just Think Twice](#)

Other resources:

- [CADCA Drug-Free Kids Campaign](#)
- [Communities that Care](#)
- [Family Resource Center](#)