



# Parents who Check In can prevent teen substance use.

Parents, you really can influence your teens ...  
Even if talking is difficult, it is important  
to Check In with your teens and network with  
other parents.



Metro West  
Parents  
Check In

# What you *say* and *do* matter:

Below is a list of things you can do to **Check In**.

Check off the things below that you are already doing. Then, find ways to do some others—challenge yourself!

## Talk with your teen

- Good:** Encourage conversation.
- Better:** Give your child a chance to teach you something new.
- Best:** Give your teenager the skills and the words to say “no” to alcohol and drugs.

## Know your teen

- Good:** If you have alcohol or prescription drugs in your home, keep track of them and make sure they are not accessible to teens.
- Better:** When your teen arrives home, look for signs of alcohol and drug use. Teens who believe their parents would notice are less likely to use substances.
- Best:** Plan in advance what you would do if you discover that your teen has been drinking or using drugs. Determine ahead of time how you want to react, how you would enforce the consequences, and who you would turn to for support or guidance if necessary.

## Model good behavior

- Good:** Remain clear and consistent in sharing your expectation that your teen doesn’t drink or use drugs.
- Better:** Avoid messages that glorify or promote alcohol use.
- Best:** Set a good example. Your teen will notice the decisions you make about drinking and drug use.



talk with your teen

As a parent, you already understand that your relationship can make a difference in the choices that your teen makes. The guidance you give strengthens the bond you have with your child and helps challenge media images that glamorize substance use. You can also give your teenager the tools he or she will need to resist peer pressure to use alcohol or drugs. Still, finding the right words to say, and when to say them, can be tough.

talk with your teen

...It's the First Step in Prevention

Developing open, trusting communication is essential to helping your teen avoid alcohol or drug use. If your child feels comfortable talking openly with you, you'll have a greater chance of guiding him or her toward healthy decision-making. Your active listening paves the way for conversations about topics that concern you.

### Some ways to begin:

- Encourage your teen to talk about his or her interests.
- Listen without interruption.
- Give your teen a chance to teach you something new.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Encourage your teen to tell you how he or she thinks and feels about the issue you're discussing.

- Avoid questions that have a simple “yes” or “no” answer.
- Control your emotions.
- Try not to respond with anger if you hear something you don't like. Instead, take a few deep breaths and acknowledge your feelings in a constructive way.
- Don't lecture or try to “score points” by showing how your teen is wrong and you are right.
- Show respect for your teen's viewpoint, and he or she will be more likely to listen to and respect yours.

### Tips on Setting Rules

When setting rules, it's important that the rules are clear and have reasonable and enforceable consequences. These tips might help:

- Expectations and rules should be specific so teens know if they are following them. No "gray" areas.
- Communicate them clearly to your teen. Ask him or her to repeat them back to you. Sometimes what we think we say and what teens hear can be very different.
- Set clear but reasonable consequences. Consider involving your child in defining the consequences.
- Be consistent in enforcing the rules even when it's inconvenient or difficult for you. Sporadic consequences are not effective.
- Talk to other parents about the rules and consequences they've set. You might find something that works for you and your teen. It may also help that other parents have set similar consequences.

### Help Your Teens Know What to Say

Give your teenager the skills and the words to say "no" to alcohol and drugs. Teens say they prefer quick "one-liners" that allow them to dodge a drink without making a big scene. It will probably work best for your teen to take the lead in thinking of comebacks to offers of alcohol or drugs so that he or she will feel comfortable saying them. To get the brainstorming started, here are some simple pressure-busters:

- "No thanks. I'm good."
- "I don't feel like it. Do you have any soda?"
- "I don't drink."
- "My parents would kill me. I'd be grounded for life!"
- "I can't afford to—I'd get kicked off the team (club, etc.)."
- "My coach would hit the roof, and I don't want to let my teammates down."

### Here are some talking points that may help . . .

#### Set the Rules:

- "If you're at a party where kids are drinking, I want you to call me and I'll come pick you up."
- "I love you, and I want the best for you, so I don't want you to use alcohol or drugs."
- "I really want you to be healthy and safe, that's why I don't want you to use alcohol or drugs."

#### Avoid Risky Situations:

- "It's never OK for you to ride in a car with someone who has been drinking. Call an adult if you ever find yourself in an unsafe situation."
- "I care enough about you to ask you who you are going with and what you are going to do. I'm your parent, and it's my job to keep you safe."
- "You know I love you, but I'm your parent not your friend."
- "I don't want you to be where kids are drinking. I'll help you come up with other ideas about what you and your friends can do for fun."

#### Enforce the Rules:

- "We've talked about why it's important not to use alcohol or drugs, and the consequences. You have no (Internet, telephone, car, visit to friends' houses, allowance, etc.) privileges for (time period)."
- "I'm glad you told me. I'm disappointed that you tried alcohol or drugs, and I don't want you to do it again. Do you remember what the consequences are that we agreed on? What would you do if you were in my position and you wanted to keep your own child safe?"
- "I'm not happy that you will be punished, but these consequences are important. They show that we are really serious about these rules, and we expect you to obey them."



# know your teen

Teenagers are always at risk of underage drinking, and there are countless opportunities for them to test the limits. A parent's job is to make the rules clear and monitor teens—where they go, who they are with, and what they do. This kind of monitoring is not a violation of trust; rather, it should be a regular and expected part of parenting throughout the pre-teen and teen years.

Your teen expects you to keep him or her from drinking and using drugs. It is okay to monitor what they do. We've tried to make it easier with these five tips.

## Five Tips for Preventing Underage Drinking

### Tip 1 Limit Access

**Good:** If you have alcohol and prescription drugs in your home, keep track of them—know what and how much you have—and keep them where they're not accessible to your teen.

**Better:** Ask young adult relatives not to provide your teen with alcohol.

**Best:** Alert the police if you have information about where or how teens are getting alcohol in your community.

### Tip 2 Network

**Good:** Get to know your teen's friends.

**Better:** Get to know the *parents* of your teen's friends. Know their rules so you don't have to just accept the argument "everybody else is allowed to..."

**Best:** Let the parents of your teen's friends know your rules and where you stand on underage alcohol use—no drinking or supplying alcohol, ever.

### Tip 3 Reinforce and Enforce

**Good:** Reinforce the rules and consequences of underage drinking with your teen.

**Better:** Explain the reasons behind the rules so your teen understands the rules are a protective measure, not just a restriction on their freedom.

**Best:** Enforce your rules consistently. Don't look the other way if your teen violates the rules.

Your teen needs to know that you are serious and that he or she will be held accountable for violating them.

### Tip 4 Check In Often

**Good:** Before your teen goes to a party or gathering, ask if adults will be there and call the host to make sure alcohol will not be available.

**Better:** Ask your teen to call you from the party or gathering. If you have caller ID, ask him or her to use a land line, not a cell phone so that you can tell where your teen actually is at that time.

**Best:** Trust but verify—Check In with other parents about your teen's activities or drop by occasionally.

### Tip 5 Be Awake and Be Ready

**Good:** Wait up, or set the alarm for curfew time—talk with your teen about their night.

**Better:** Know the signs of alcohol and drug use. Teens who believe their parents would find out about their substance use are less likely to drink.

**Best:** Plan in advance what you would do if you discover that your teen has been drinking or using drugs. Determine ahead of time how you want to react, how you would enforce the consequences, and who you would turn to for support or guidance if necessary.



# model good behavior

Sometimes, without realizing it, adults can show attitudes and behaviors that may make alcohol use seem more appealing to a teen. While it is never a parent's intent to encourage underage drinking, some actions may do just that.

Here is a checklist of attitudes and behaviors that may contribute to your teen's use.

## Check the appropriate box for each question:

|   | Often                    | Sometimes                | Never                    |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Do you make lighthearted or joking comments about other people's heavy drinking? (e.g., "She holds her liquor well!")  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Do you tell funny or glorified stories about you or your friends' drinking antics when you were younger?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Do you ask your child to get you an alcoholic drink from the fridge?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Do you wear t-shirts, baseball caps, etc. that advertise or promote drinking and/or specific brands of alcohol?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. When watching television with your child, do you laugh at scenes where alcohol is being abused?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Do you host adult social gatherings at your home where alcoholic beverages are the only drinks served and/or where drinking is the central focus of the gathering? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

|  | Often                    | Sometimes                | Never                    |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7. Do you assume that alcohol is a necessary part of any celebration or social gathering?                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Do you model using alcohol as a stress reduction tool? (e.g., "I've had a long day, I need a drink!") | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Do you offer alcohol to your teen as a way to celebrate special occasions?                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Do you host parties at your house where alcohol is served or available to teens?                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Does your teen observe you drinking several drinks on any one occasion?                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. Does your teen observe you driving after drinking?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you answered "often" or "sometimes" two or more times, you might be unintentionally sending mixed messages to your child that imply it's OK for him or her to drink or experiment with alcohol. By glamorizing alcohol use, you also send the message that it is a rite of passage and expected. Teens, and even young children, are quick to pick up on these messages even when that is not your intention.

Remain clear and consistent about rules, and avoid messages that glamorize or promote alcohol use. These are good ways to provide your children with the role modeling they need to stay away from drugs and alcohol.

For more information  
or to find out how you  
can get involved, visit:

[www.parentscheckin.org](http://www.parentscheckin.org)

### **MetroWest Parents Check In**

A campaign of the MetroWest Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Initiative funded by the MetroWest Community Health Care Foundation. For more information: [www.parentscheckin.org](http://www.parentscheckin.org)



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