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- Can begin as early as elementary school. The Washington Healthy Youth Survey shows that by the time teens are in the 10th grade, one in five has started using alcohol or marijuana regularly.
- Can harm the developing teen brain. Alcohol and marijuana can harm areas of the brain that control motor coordination, impulse control, memory, learning and judgment. Because the teen brain is still developing, it is more vulnerable than an adult’s brain to the effects of alcohol and other drugs. This can lead to school failure and dropout.
- Is associated with the top three causes of teen deaths: accidents (including traffic fatalities and drowning), homicide, and suicide. Excessive drinking is responsible for more than 4,300 deaths among underage youth each year. In 2010, there were 189,000 emergency room visits nationwide by those under age 21 for injuries related to alcohol. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).
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- Isn’t safer at home under your supervision. Teens can overdose on alcohol or marijuana just as easily at home. You and your teen can be held legally liable for property damage, assault, injuries, and deaths resulting from underage use on your property. If you allow your teen to use alcohol or marijuana at home, they are more likely to think it’s okay when they are with their friends.

What can I do to keep my children healthy and safe?

You have the greatest influence in your child’s decisions about alcohol and other drugs – even during the teen years. The top reason most kids give for not using drugs? They don’t want to disappoint their parents. Here are some proven ways to help your child avoid alcohol and other drugs:

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- Bond with your child. Children who feel close to their parents are less likely to use alcohol or marijuana. Stay actively involved in their lives, eat dinner together and do fun family activities. Recognize them often for making positive and healthy choices.
- Set boundaries. Have clear rules about no alcohol or marijuana use, and consistently enforce reasonable consequences for breaking the rules. Role play situations where your child might be offered alcohol or other drugs, and practice ways to refuse them.
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Bonding: Close relationships

Boundaries: Rules and consequences

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