



## How to Talk to Your Teen About Substance Abuse

Talking to your teen about drugs and alcohol should be an ongoing conversation. There should be planned discussions and spontaneous teaching moments.



## Tips for Talking to Your Teen About Drugs and Alcohol



### Ask your teen's views.

Avoid lectures. Instead, listen to your teen's opinions and questions about drugs. Assure your teen that they can be honest with you.



### Discuss reasons not to use drugs.

Avoid scare tactics. Emphasize how drug use can affect the things that are important to your teen — such as sports, driving, health, and appearance.



### Consider media messages.

Social media, television programs, movies, and songs can glamorize or trivialize drug use. Talk about what your teen sees and hears.



### Discuss ways to resist peer pressure.

Brainstorm with your teen about how to turn down offers of drugs.



### Be ready to discuss your own drug use.

Think about how you'll respond if your teen asks about your own drug use. If you chose not to use drugs, explain why. If you did use drugs, share what the experience taught you.

Mayo Clinic (2021)

If your teen is under the influence, this is not the time to have a discussion. The time for these important, and sometimes hard, discussions about what happened is when everybody is clear headed and calm.



## If You Think Your Teen is Involved in Drug Use



### Talk to them.

You can never intervene too early. Casual drug use can turn into excessive use or addiction and cause accidents, legal trouble, and health problems.



### Encourage honesty.

Speak calmly and express that you are coming from a place of concern. Share specific details to back up your suspicions. Verify any claims your teen makes.



### Focus on the behavior, not the person.

Emphasize that drug use is dangerous but that doesn't mean your teen is a bad person.



### Check in regularly.

Spend more time with your teen, know your teen's whereabouts, and ask questions after they return home.



### Get professional help.

If you think your teen is involved in significant drug use, contact a doctor, counselor, or other healthcare provider for help.

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## SAMHSA's National Helpline

1-800-662-HELP (4257)

SAMHSA's National Helpline is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families who are facing mental and/or substance use disorders.

### References

Mayo Clinic. (2021, February 25). *Teen drug abuse: Help your teen avoid drugs*. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/tween-and-teen-health/in-depth/teen-drug-abuse/art-20045921>

Additional resources, skills, and strategies for parents are available at no cost through the online Thrive Initiative programming. Visit the Thrive website <https://thrive.psu.edu>, and sign up today!