

**Start Talking,  
Keep Talking,  
Listen,  
Take Action.**



**Making a Difference.**  
[chestnut.org/prevention](http://chestnut.org/prevention)



[healthycommunitiespartnership.com](http://healthycommunitiespartnership.com)

Funding provided in whole or in part by the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

#### REFERENCE

Prevention First. "A Parent's Guide to Raising Drug-Free Teens" brochure, July 2009

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) "Talk, They Hear You" Campaign, [www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov](http://www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov);

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. "A Family Guide to Underage Drinking Prevention", brochure 2010.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking: A Guide to Action For Families U.S. Department Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, 2007.

**Parents Matter.**

## Parents,

You are the single most important influence in keeping your children drug-free.

Research shows that the number one reason teenagers don't use drugs is because they don't want to disappoint their parents.

From many years of research, the best way to keep children and teens from having addiction problems later in life is to prevent them from first trying drugs in their teenage years.

**More than 80% of children say parents are the leading influence in their decision to drink or not.**



# What You Can Do

## Get the facts

Before you talk to your kids, be sure you are up-to-date with current drug information. These websites contain helpful information:

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

[www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov)

## Share why drugs are harmful

Young bodies cannot process alcohol and other drugs as well as adults because many of their organs are not fully developed. Research now shows that human brains are not fully developed until the mid-20's. This means that for children and teens alcohol and drugs have more harmful effects more quickly, such as: delayed mental, social, and physical development, an increased chance of addiction, and delayed development of critical thinking skills.

## Know where they are and who they are with

Youth who are regularly monitored by their parents are less likely to use drugs. Monitoring is especially important when children reach middle school. Kids at this age are strongly influenced by the beliefs of their classmates and friends.

## Keep talking

Lots of little talks are more effective than one "big talk". Use teachable moments to talk about drug and alcohol issues. Use public service announcements, stories on the news, TV plot lines, or current issues in the community to spur conversation. Take time to talk with and listen to your child. Find out how things are going in their life. Give your teen the chance to ask you questions and listen to what they have to say.

## Talk to other parents

To make your family rules work better, you can talk to other adults who may influence your child's beliefs and actions about underage drinking and drug use. What do parents of your teen's friend think about underage drinking or drug use? Will they respect your family rules when hosting your teen? Either way, you'll want to know what rules will be in place anywhere your child or teen wants to spend much time.

# Parents Matter.



## Know when they are in trouble

Even with your best efforts, some teens may still use drugs. Here are some behaviors that may mean your child is using drugs:

- Declining grades.
- Increase in absences.
- Unusual bad temper
- Change in overall attitude
- Deteriorating physical appearance and poor grooming
- Association with known drug users
- Increase in frequency of money being borrowed
- Hiding chemical odor, excess use of perfume, incense, air fresheners
- Secrecy surrounding activities, personal possessions, whereabouts.

If your student displays some of these warning signs or you are concerned, seek help.