



Substance Abuse Awareness and Prevention

The Project AWARE Ohio team has developed an information brief entitled *Substance Abuse Awareness and Prevention*. This brief includes information about 1) how to recognize substance abuse in children and adolescents, 2) signs a child or adolescent may be abusing drugs or alcohol, 3) risk and protective factors associated with substance abuse, 4) best practices and strategies for adults who want to help prevent substance abuse among young people (excerpted below), and 5) a list of evidence-based prevention programs found on the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices.

Strategies for Parents (and Other Adults) to Help Prevent Youth Drug/Alcohol Abuse

- **Establish guidelines:** Set expectations and make this clear to your child. Let them know what is acceptable behavior and what is not. It may also be helpful to discuss different types of drugs and the dangers associated with them. This takes away the mystery associated with drug use and will hopefully prevent them from experimenting with drugs they do not know anything about.
- **Monitor your teen(s):** Be aware of where your teen is, who they are with, and what they are doing. This can be done by checking in with them through phone calls, randomly coming home earlier than expected, having neighbors watch for visitors to the house while you are gone, and monitoring the levels of prescription drugs in your home. Also, watch for changes in your teen's habits or the people they are spending time with. It may also be helpful to monitor what they are watching on TV related to the use of drugs and alcohol.
- **Make consequences of drug use clear:** Just as it is important to establish clear expectations, it is also important to make it clear what the consequences are when these guidelines are not followed. For example, you can discuss the various consequences that may result from drug use, including legal penalties, health problems, academic issues, etc. Additionally, rather than focusing on punishments, you may also consider rewarding your teen for engaging in positive behaviors, such as doing well in school and following household rules.
- **Have an open dialogue:** It is essential for your teen to be able to trust you and communicate with you about these issues. This can be established by being open and honest when talking with them about drug use.⁶
- **Be a good role model for your child:** Model positive behaviors, such as only drinking in moderation, never driving after drinking, and avoiding the use of illegal drugs.
- **Be involved in your child's life:** Listen to them, and don't judge. Encourage your child to call you if they are ever in a situation where they feel uncomfortable. Build a sense of trust and non-judgment, and emphasize that they will not get in trouble for calling you for help.
- **Encourage your child to participate in extracurricular activities:** Being involved in extracurricular activities and community service makes it less likely a teen will become involved with drugs and alcohol. Encourage your child to participate in things like sports, clubs, and community service.
- **Encourage your child to work hard in school:** Teens who are doing well in school are less likely to use drugs and alcohol. Ask your child about school often, and be supportive. Help them to reach their goals and to get help when needed (i.e., from a tutor or counselor).

Strategies from: <https://drugabuse.com/library/drug-abuse-prevention/>
<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/substance-abuse/7-ways-to-protect-teen-from-alcohol-drugs.pdf>

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