

KEEPING YOUR TEEN HEALTHY

Talk to your teen

Images with smoking, drugs, alcohol and sex are everywhere. If you are the parent or guardian of a teen, it is important to talk openly with your teen about these topics. Setting rules and clear expectations can help prevent risky behaviors.

Did you know?

- Marijuana is the most commonly used drug by 12-17 year olds
- Nearly 1 in 3 high school students reported drinking alcohol for the first time before age 13
- About 1 in 3 high school students are sexually active

Teens smoke, use drugs or alcohol or have sex for many reasons, including:

- To reduce stress
- To feel grown up
- To fit in with friends
- Because it feels good
- Curiosity
- Because their parents or guardians do
- Because it is easy to do



Sex and safety

Discuss the possible outcomes of sex with your teen, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or pregnancy. If your teen is sexually active, it is important that she or he is tested for chlamydia each year. Chlamydia is one of the most common STIs and may not have signs or symptoms. A urine sample is needed to test for chlamydia. Chlamydia is treatable, but needs to be caught early to avoid health issues such as fever, painful urination or infertility. Ask for a chlamydia screening at your teen's next Primary Care Provider (PCP) visit.

Drinking and drugs

Drinking and drugs can cause serious health problems. Teens may also make other risky decisions if they drink or use drugs. Talk to your teen about your expectations for them with drinking and drugs and how to make healthy lifestyle choices.

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Smoking

Teens that start smoking early are more likely to smoke as adults. Teens between 13-17 years old who smoke daily are more likely to use other drugs in the future. Talk to your teen about the dangers and health risks of smoking. If your teen smokes, help them quit.

Preventive Care

Even if healthy, take your teen to his or her PCP each year for preventive care. Preventive care includes well-visits, physicals and vaccines. Ask your teen's PCP if he or she is up-to-date with his or her shots.

Tips for Talking With Your Teen

- Talk about family expectations and consequences for breaking rules, but do not lecture or threaten your teen. Enforce the consequences for breaking the rules
- Talk about personal, family, social or religious values and traditions that give your teen reasons not to take part in risky activities
- Talk with your teen about ways to handle pressure from friends. Teach your teen how to say "no" and to suggest doing something different. To feel comfortable talking openly with you, your teen needs to know that you will not punish him or her for being honest
- Help your teen develop outside interests. Encourage him or her to join a team or club, volunteer, get a part-time job or any kind of lessons
- When your teen wants to talk, listen. Help him or her make good decisions and treat him or her with respect
- Get to know your teen's friends and their parents. Know where they hang out and what they are doing
- Be a role model

