

## INFORMATION YOU CAN TRUST FROM THE FALMOUTH PREVENTION PARTNERSHIP



### TEENS AND ALCOHOL ABUSE

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As much as you may not like to think about it, many kids and teens use alcohol during their high school and college years, long before it's legal for them to drink it.

In Falmouth, a recent survey of high school students (depending on grade level) more than 55% of the teens reported alcohol use during the past 30 days.

Although experimentation with alcohol is common among kids, it is not safe or legal. So it is important to start discussing alcohol use and abuse with your kids at an early age and keep talking about it as they grow up.

#### The Effects of Alcohol Abuse

Alcohol interferes with a person's perception of reality and ability to make good decisions. This can be particularly hazardous for kids and teens who have less problem-solving and decision-making experience.

Some short-term effects of drinking include distorted vision, hearing, and coordination and impaired judgment, which can lead to accidents, drowning, and other risky behaviors like unsafe sex and drug use.

#### Help Your Kids Say No

Long before your kids are presented with a chance to drink alcohol, you can increase the chances that they will just say **NO**.

By the teen years, your kids should know the facts about alcohol and your attitudes and beliefs about substance abuse. If you make your teen feel accepted and respected as an individual, you increase the chances that your child will try to be open with you. Kids want to be liked and accepted by their peers, and they need a certain degree of privacy and trust. Even when they're annoyed by parental interest and questions, teens still recognize that it comes with the territory.

In fact, not wanting to harm the relationships between themselves and the adults who care about them is the most common reason that young people give for not using alcohol and other drugs.

### **General Tips**

Fortunately, you can do much to protect your kids from using and abusing alcohol:

- Be a good role model. Consider how your use of alcohol or medications may influence your kids.
- Educate yourself about alcohol so you can be a better teacher.
- Help build your child's self-esteem. Your kids are more likely to feel good about themselves if you emphasize their strengths and reinforce healthy behaviors.
- Teach kids to manage stress in healthy ways, such as by seeking help from a trusted adult or engaging in a favorite activity.
- Keep tabs on where your kids go and know how to contact them.

***And, don't forget that it is against the law for you to provide alcohol for anyone under age 21!***

### **Recognizing the Signs**

Despite your efforts, your child may still use alcohol. Here are some common warning signs:

- the odor of alcohol
- sudden change in mood or attitude
- change in attendance or performance at school
- loss of interest in school, sports, or other activities
- discipline problems at school
- withdrawal from family and friends
- association with a new group of friends and reluctance to introduce them to you
- alcohol disappearing from your home
- depression and developmental difficulties

If your child is using alcohol, there will usually be a cluster of these signs, like changes in friends, behavior, dress, attitude, mood, and grades. If you see a number of changes, look for all explanations by talking to your kids, but don't overlook substance abuse as a possibility.

### **Recommended Resource**

MedlinePlus: Underage Drinking is an excellent source of information about underage drinking. The site provides access to information from reliable sources that is accurate and up-to-date. ([www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/underagedrinking.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/underagedrinking.html))

For more information, visit the partnership's website at: [www.falmouthprevention.org](http://www.falmouthprevention.org).