



# PARENTS GUIDE

## TALKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT DRINKING

Good communication is vital and provides opportunities to work through issues including the role of alcohol in socialising and becoming an adult. Even if during adolescence it seems as though your relationship with them has changed, your teenagers will still seek your guidance, stability and support as they enter new situations and social experiences. Remember that it is important to start a discussion early and not just when the problems arise.

### Communicating with my teenager about the consequences of drinking.

Encouraging trust and respect in your family can ease communication through the teenage years. As a parent, you can assist with reducing alcohol-related harms through regular discussion with your children about alcohol. If you feel unsure about talking with them about alcohol use, don't be afraid to seek professional support and guidance. Information about support can be found overleaf.

### Tips for effective communication with young people.

Communication is the key to identifying, understanding and resolving problems. It's a two-way process and accepting that teenagers may see things differently is the first step in discussing issues about alcohol effectively with them.

#### Be patient and stay calm

Be patient with your teenager. Sometimes they may have difficulty expressing themselves and may say things they don't mean. Try not to take what they say personally and avoid engaging in conflict, arguments or emotionally driven discussion.

TIPS

- Be patient.
- Be understanding.

#### Listen and be non-judgemental

Be prepared to listen to what's being said without judgement. It's ok to disagree but allow them to finish without interruption. This demonstrates your genuine interest in their point of view and gives you the opportunity to expect the same respect when it's your turn to speak.

TIPS

- Listen without judgement.
- Listen with a full ear not half an ear (i.e. busy doing something else).
- Don't interrupt and expect the same in return.
- Share your point of view.

#### Choose your time

Choosing the right time is important. If teenagers feel like you are trying to get information out of them, they may be less open. It's better to find a comfortable time to raise the topic. It's not a good idea to try and talk things through when they're intoxicated, or if you are upset.

TIPS

- Find the right time to talk.
- Talk when they're not intoxicated.
- Talk when everyone has calmed down.
- Minimise distractions (i.e TV, phones, other company).

#### Help young people to think for themselves

Try not to provide all the answers or focus only on your concerns. Young people need to talk through the consequences of their actions and make their own decisions. Support them by recognising and encouraging positive behaviours.

TIPS

- Talk through consequences.
- Help them reach their own decisions.
- Be supportive and show respect.
- Encourage positive behaviour.

#### Be honest

Don't be afraid to be honest about your values and be open about your concerns. This way your teenager will be more likely to understand you care about their well-being. Explain that it's a particular behaviour you disapprove of, not them. Give examples to communicate this. Keep your word, as this gives them the opportunity to do the same.

TIPS

- Be honest about what concerns you.
- Use examples to show you disapprove of the behaviour, not the person.
- Keep your word.



### Lead by example

It's important that you are sober when talking about responsible alcohol use so that you don't give a mixed message or lower your credibility. Young people want you to understand what they're experiencing, so allow them to be open with you. While their experience may be different to when you were young, your

experience and opinions are important to them.

Talk about problems that can occur when drinking, including what can happen if they drink too much or drink rapidly. If you have been in any difficult situations yourself, you can use these to help them consider how they would respond in a similar situation. Let them know that they should always call for help in an emergency situation, even if they worry about getting into trouble.

#### TIPS

- Be sober when discussing alcohol.
- Be open and honest about your values and experiences.
- Talk about the problems that can occur.
- Develop strategies with your teenager to help them deal with difficult situations.
- Talk about what to do in an emergency situation.

### Make decisions together

Establishing ground rules and setting boundaries is easier to achieve with your teenager when they're given the opportunity to contribute.

If you negotiate with everyone's needs in mind, it will give you the opportunity to discuss your values and reasons for setting rules and allow them to take responsibility when it comes to following them.

It's important to agree on consequences if rules are broken and make sure you follow through with action.

#### TIPS

- Negotiate an agreement.
- Discuss your values and reasons for setting limits.
- Allow them to take responsibility for agreements.
- Agree on realistic consequences you can manage and follow through on.

### Keep talking

After you've begun discussing alcohol use with them don't be afraid to talk about it again. Keep the lines of communication open. Talk through the issues when things are going fine and let them know you're always approachable if they want to talk.

#### TIPS

- Keep the lines of communication open.
- Don't be afraid to talk about things more than once or when things are fine.
- Show you're approachable when they need to talk.

### Information and support

If you're having difficulties dealing with any of the topics outlined in this flyer you don't have to go it alone. There are alcohol and other drug services in your community that can provide professional assistance and information. The listings below provide current information, support and referrals to services available in your area.

#### Alcohol and Drug Support Line

**(08) 9442 5000 or 1800 198 024 (country callers)**

A free 24-hour, state-wide, confidential telephone information and support service for parents and families concerned about alcohol and other drug use. Callers can speak with a professional counsellor or be put in touch with local Community Drug Service Teams in your area who can provide counselling, education and support.

#### Parent and Family Drug Support Line

**(08) 9442 5050 or 1800 653 203 (country callers)**

A free 24-hour, state-wide, confidential telephone information and support service for parents and families concerned about alcohol and other drug use. Callers can speak to either a professional counsellor or to a trained parent volunteer who has experience with a child using alcohol and other drugs.

**Health experts recommend that the safest option for young people under 18 years of age is to not drink alcohol at all.**