

What Youth Should Know About Drugs

Most middle school students don't use drugs, which is great! But experience has shown that those who do are more likely to experience problems at school, at home and with their friends. Here are some tips on how to stay away from drugs.

- **Don't be afraid to say no:** If someone is pressuring you to do something that's not right for you, you have the right to say no, the right not to give a reason why, and the right to just walk away.
- **Connect with your friends (your real friends) and avoid negative peer pressure:** Pay attention to who you are hanging out with. If you are hanging out with a group where kids are drinking alcohol or using drugs, you may want to think about making some new friends.
- **Make connections with your parents or other adults:** As you grow up, having people you can talk to about your decisions about alcohol and drugs is very important.
- **Enjoy life and do what you love—Don't add alcohol and drugs:** Get out and get active in school and community activities such as music, sports, arts or a part-time job. Remember that what you do in middle school can affect your eligibility to play sports in high school.
- **Follow the Family Rules about alcohol and drugs:** As you grow up and want to assume more control over your life, having the trust and respect of your parents is very important. Don't let alcohol and drugs come between you and your parents.
- **Get educated about alcohol and drugs:** You cannot rely on the myths and misconceptions that are out there among your friends and on the internet. Your ability to make the right decisions includes getting educated. And, as you learn, share what you are learning with your friends and your family.
- **Plan ahead:** As you make plans for a party or going out with friends you need to plan ahead. You need to protect yourself and be smart.
- **Speak Out/Speak Up/Take Control:** Take responsibility for your life, your health and your safety. Speak up about what alcohol and drugs are doing to your friends, your community and encourage others to do the same.
- **Get help:** If you or someone you know is in trouble with alcohol or drugs, get help. Don't wait. You don't have to be alone.

Remember...

- Research and experience show that the younger someone starts using alcohol and drugs, the greater the chance that they will become addicted. It is easy for occasional use to change to frequent use or constant use -- that is addiction.
- As a teen you should be concerned about alcohol and all of the other drugs, legal and illegal. If it's not legal and prescribed to you by your doctor—don't use it.
- Marijuana use has very real health consequences, including impacting your lung capacity, your athletic performance and motivation, and possible drug addiction.

Choose health. Choose sports. Choose life!

For more information go to playforkeepsalaska.org

What Coaches Should Know About Drug Use

Coaches—You Can Influence Youth

The game will be affected

Sports were designed to be a fun and competitive way to gain exercise. They were not designed to include drug use. Communicate the serious effect of drugs on the game by asking your players to guess how their foul shots, field goals, or home runs would be affected by drugs. To put it simply, they won't happen. Scientific studies show that drugs impair coordination and abilities. How does this translate on the athletic field?

- A basketball player using drugs is more likely to miss a game-winning free throw.
- A football receiver using marijuana is less likely to outrun a defender. Speed, lung capacity, muscle strength, and stamina all can drop with marijuana use.
- A skier using drugs likewise dramatically increases his or her chances of suffering a career-ending injury.

If a player's performance is weak because of drug use, the player will have to live knowing that he or she has disappointed the team, the coach, and others -- all for a few minutes of a false high.

Take a Stand

- When talking to players, remember they relate more to messages about the immediate effects of drug use (such as poorer athletic performance) than to its long-term health threats.
- Openly acknowledge and support the understanding that drug use is considered an important issue at your school.
- Know the school policies about drug use and be ready to enforce the consequences of breaking those rules, even with your star players.
- Share positive stories with your students about athletes who have taken a stand against drug use, including doping.
- Recognize your influence with young people. Live a drug-free life.

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What Parents Should Know About Drug Use

Parents—You Can Influence Your Children

Boost Their Self-Esteem

Teens who have high self-esteem are better equipped to make smart choices, deal with peer pressure, and avoid drug use. Boost your teen's self-esteem by:

- Praising achievements
- Helping set realistic goals
- Giving choices
- Offering responsibilities
- Focusing on teen's strengths without comparing to others
- Taking all of your teen's concerns seriously

Talk To your kids about drug use

Starting the Conversation – (These tips are useful when talking about tobacco or alcohol, too.)

Say something to show you are open-minded, then ask your teen about his or her own experiences. Use thought-provoking questions that can be asked in a supportive, non-threatening way. For example:

- Do you know kids who use drugs?
- How has it affected them?
- Have you ever been offered pills or marijuana by someone you knew?
- If so, what did you say? If not, what would you say?
- What if someone really pushed you?
- What would you say if they said... Is there another side to this view?
- Do you see any risks?
- Do you have any concerns?

Be Involved

As a parent you can work with your local school system to help prevent drug use. Working together parents, teachers, administrators and coaches can be powerful influencers of teen behavior. This checklist can help as you talk with your school:

- My teen's school will help/intervene if there is reason to believe a teen is using drugs.
- My teen's school requires parents to be kept informed of school policies regarding drug use or possession.
- I will actively support school policies on drug user and possession and the enforcement of them.
- If you hear information from your teens about potential issues in school, share those issues with school authorities.

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