



## **Your Child Didn't Come With an Owner's Manual? Here's Help...**

**Prevention is Parenting.** Nothing impacts a child's life more than their parents. If the foundation of prevention is good parenting, then the heart of good parenting is communication. We can't talk with our kids about drugs if we're not first talking with and listening to them about what's going on in their lives. Consider these guidelines:

**Listen when your child talks to you - really listen.** Make eye contact.

**Create moments for your child to talk with you.** Do chores or run errands together.

**Give your child chores to** teach responsibility and provide a sense of contribution.

**Plan a family meeting.** Set aside a time every week.

**Establish family boundaries.** Explain what is unacceptable and outline consequences.

**Help your child say no.** Teach them how to think through a situation and its consequences.

**Role-play with your child to allow him/her to practice their responses.**

**Prevention is Preparing.** Parents need to be educated about drug use and abuse. Every child is faces the threat.

**Prevention is Partnering.** Talk with the parents of your child's friends and agree to common boundaries for illegal behavior. Get to know the parent coalitions in your community and get involved.

Sometimes we're not sure how to talk with our kids about drugs, whether our information is up-to-date, and there is the issue of our own past use.

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## **Alcohol**

### **Before talking . . . be prepared:**

Come to terms with your own attitude towards underage drinking. Examine your own use of alcohol. Know the laws regarding alcohol in your community.

### **Ready to talk?**

Remember that the most important thing you can convey is your own attitude and concerns.

Make clear your no-tolerance position. Explain that underage drinking is illegal for good reason: youth under age 21 are vulnerable to the physical effects of alcohol and addiction.

Conversation is a two-way street. Be ready to listen as well as talk! Find out from your child to what extent alcohol is a part of their world.





Your role is to help translate facts about alcohol into the consequences of drinking. Pick out a few of these facts, and help them understand the risks.

Discuss with your child how to handle situations when they are confronted by peers who are drinking.

What happens if your child gets into trouble with the law because of alcohol? Don't bail them out! Let them experience the consequences. This, too, is prevention.

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## Heroin

### **Prevention is preparing. What you need to know:**

Heroin is usually smoked or sniffed but may be injected. Two prevailing realities increase the vulnerability of young adults to heroin:

- \* Today's youth haven't witnessed the effects of heroin, and don't know its horror. They believe that if heroin is not injected, it is not addictive.

- \* Substance use is glorified in the world of fashion and entertainment, magazines and music lyrics. Kids are willing to try the high to emulate their cult heroes or just to take risks.

Addiction to heroin is hellish, and its higher purity increases the likelihood of lethal overdose.

Heroin affects the brain, bringing an intense high, followed by drowsiness, nausea, vomiting, and itching. Tolerance soon develops, so more and more heroin is needed to produce the same high.

Addiction occurs quickly and is a living nightmare. Withdrawal lasts up to 72 hours, resulting in vomiting, diarrhea, cramping and severe shaking. Cravings can last for years.

Heroin is a street and a "club" drug. Users usually come to heroin by way of alcohol and/or marijuana first, and often mix it with other drugs. Often they "speedball," chasing cocaine with heroin. Most regular users begin in their late teens and early twenties.

### **Reality Check.**

- \* Recognize the link between tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana to heroin use: underage drinking or experimenting with marijuana is not OK.

- \* Understand the pervasive influence of pop culture on your child. Tune into your child's world.

- \* As your child gets older, make sure they understand the dangers of heroin.

- \* Most of all, build a solid foundation with your kids. They will value what you value.

The absolute best thing you can give your child is your time, your attention, yourself.

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## Inhalants





**Before talking . . . be prepared:**

This is one area of prevention where you want to steer away from the specifics. Don't give your child ideas about how to use inhalants! **This information is intended for adults, and we recommend that it be kept where children will not find and read it.**

Educate yourself about inhalant use. Be as smart and savvy as your child thinks they are.

Examine your own attitudes. Think about the signals you send when you laugh at drunkenness on TV sitcoms or shrug off a neighbor's inebriation. These moments give mixed messages.

Keep track of household, office and workshop chemicals. If whiteout and air freshener are used at a high rate, or if you smell gas or other fumes in your child's room, you have reason to worry.

**Danger Ahead.** By replacing oxygen in the body with other gases, inhalants produce a quick "high". They can lead to brain damage and "Sudden Sniffing Death", a risk with each use.

**Ready to talk?**

Inhalants are common household products. Stress their intended use and that they are toxic–poisonous–and dangerous to the body.

Ask your child what they know about inhalants or "sniffing" and "huffing." Then listen. You will soon know if these practices are common among their peers!

Pick out a few of these facts, and ask your child what they think. Help them understand the risks: the greater the perception of risk, the greater the chance your child will not use.

Discuss with your child how to handle situations when peers who use inhalants or other substances confront them.

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## **Marijuana**

**Before talking . . . be prepared:**

First, come to terms with what you really feel and believe about marijuana.

Bear in mind that (1) Marijuana is illegal; (2) Marijuana today is significantly more potent than before. For this and other reasons, it poses a danger to youth.

Decide what your boundaries are. Is it OK for your child to have friends who smoke marijuana, or to stay at a party where others are using? What does a no-tolerance policy mean?

Educate yourself with the latest information on marijuana. Consult your library, school counselor, or local drug prevention coalition. Be as smart and savvy as your child thinks they are.

**Ready To Talk?**

When you talk with your child about marijuana, keep in mind:

The most important thing you can convey is your own attitude and concerns. Kids need to know what you think and believe.





Make clear your no-tolerance position.

Conversation is a two-way street. Be ready to listen as well as talk! Find out from your child to what extent marijuana is a part of their world. Do they know anyone who uses pot?

**Don't underestimate your influence on your kids.** Discuss with your child how to handle situations when they are confronted by peers who use marijuana or any other substances.

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## **Methamphetamine (Meth)**

### **Prevention is preparing. What you need to know:**

Methamphetamine, part of the drug culture since the 60s, was popularly known as bennies, uppers, or speed. Today's meth is purer and more dangerous.

Meth is an amphetamine, a manmade drug which stimulates the central nervous system. Today, medical use of amphetamines is limited to treating brain dysfunction in children and narcolepsy, a rare sleep disorder.

Most of the amphetamine used illicitly is meth. Manufactured in secret labs, meth requires fairly cheap chemicals and little expertise or equipment; would-be chemists obtain recipes via the Internet or from other meth cooks. Popular types are "Ice", "Designer Drugs", and Ecstasy.

- \* "Ice"— a pure, smokeable form of meth
- \* Designer drugs—derived from meth, modified by underground chemists for illicit use, and associated with "raves"
- \* "Ecstasy" acts as both a stimulant and hallucinogen. Users at raves risk exhaustion, dehydration, heat stroke, and death from a mix of the drug and non-stop dancing.

Users usually come to meth by way of alcohol and/or marijuana first, and often use meth in combination with other drugs. Most regular users are in their late teens and early twenties, and may have had their initial try in their mid-teens.

### **Reality Check.**

Meth prevention must begin early. The attraction of youth to meth is no surprise: they've been conditioned by a fast-paced culture which demands instant gratification.

This makes parental example and involvement all the more imperative. Examine your own lifestyle. Are you racing from place to place? Prioritize and make adjustments.

- \* Limit your child's extracurricular activities to one or two. Encourage them to balance their life with play that exercises their mind and body. Better yet, join your child in these activities.
- \* Encourage activities which are driven by inner, not outer, stimulation. Limit TV and computer time. Send your child outside to play.





- \* Accept and enjoy the moment. Show your child that things don't always have to be bigger, better, faster.

Recognize the link of tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana to meth use. Understand that prevention of these gateway substances is possible.

As your child gets older, make sure they understands the dangers of meth. The greater their perception of risk, the greater the chance a young person will not use.

Discuss with your child how to handle situations in which they are confronted by peers who are using.

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## **Tobacco**

### **Before talking . . . be prepared:**

Nicotine is an addictive drug. When kids start smoking at a young age, they are more comfortable with the idea of trying alcohol and other drugs.

Come to terms with your own attitude toward tobacco. If you smoke or use tobacco, you increase the likelihood that your child will also.

Think about this: no one can smoke without harming their body—no ifs, ands or butts.

### **Ready To Talk?**

Point out the downside of smoking and the difficulty of breaking the habit. Explain that smoking puts bad chemicals in their body – the same chemicals used to clean toilet bowls and poison rats.

Demonstrate the importance you place on health by not allowing people to smoke in your home, and explain to your child the dangers of secondhand smoke.

A young child will agree that smoking is gross and unhealthy, but you'll need to go further in preparing your child for adolescence. Help your child in these ways:

- \* Explain the hazards of using tobacco (cancers, stroke, high blood pressure, heart disease, ulcers, bronchitis) and the cosmetic damage (stained teeth and hands, unpleasant breath, wrinkles around mouth and eyes).
- \* Tell your child about relevant medical history – family illnesses or deaths related to its use.
- \* Point out that if they want to enjoy and excel in sports and music, they need healthy lungs.
- \* Instill in your child early on healthy ways of coping with stress.
- \* Limit the opportunities where your child might be tempted to smoke – playing at a friend's whose parents aren't home or going to an unsupervised party.
- \* Help your child come up with a ready answer if they are pressured to smoke.





- \* Make clear the consequences of their behavior and that you will not allow them to risk their health by smoking.
  - \* Tally up the cost of buying cigarettes over the course of 1 year, 5 years, a lifetime – and talk about how the money could otherwise be spent.
  - \* Discuss tobacco ads with your child. Point out what's misleading. Make your child aware of advertising and products aimed toward youth. Tell them to be smarter than advertisers!
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This is an abridged version of The Parent Kit. If you would like a complete version of the kit in an electronic file or a hard copy, call 467-4099 or visit The Shop at Red Ribbon Central at <http://greenvillefamilypartnership.org>.

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