



The challenge of speaking to children about alcohol and drugs is often daunting for parents. How to start the conversation? How often to talk? What's the right language? What's the best message? Yet, one of the most effective preventative measures is for parents to have conversations with their children about the dangers of alcohol and drug use – and starting at an early age.

For this reason, New Jersey YMCA State Alliance, The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, and Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey have partnered to create this guide to support parents' efforts to raise healthy, confident, and connected kids who are empowered to make healthy choices that include avoiding the use of alcohol and drugs.

# RESOURCES

## FOR PARENTS

- **Community in Crisis**  
[www.communityincrisis.org](http://www.communityincrisis.org)
- **Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services**  
[nj.gov/health/integratedhealth/](http://nj.gov/health/integratedhealth/)
- **Dr. Oz, Night of Conversation**  
[www.doctoroz.com/page/facing-addiction-discussion-guide](http://www.doctoroz.com/page/facing-addiction-discussion-guide)
- **Drug Identification Guide**  
[www.streetdrugs.org](http://www.streetdrugs.org)
- **Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse**  
[gcada.nj.gov/home/](http://gcada.nj.gov/home/)
- **Knock Out Opioid Abuse: Join the Conversation**  
[knockoutopioidabuse.drugfree.nj.org](http://knockoutopioidabuse.drugfree.nj.org)
- **National Institute on Drug Abuse**  
[www.drugabuse.gov/family-checkup](http://www.drugabuse.gov/family-checkup)
- **New Jersey Prevention Network**  
[www.njpn.org](http://www.njpn.org)
- **NJ Connect for Recovery**  
(P) 855 652 3737, hearing impaired (P) 877 294 4356
- **Parents. The Anti-Drug**  
[www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com)
- **State of New Jersey: Know Addiction NJ**  
[knowaddiction.nj.gov/](http://knowaddiction.nj.gov/)
- **Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services**  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)
- **Partnership for Drug-Free Kids**  
[drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org)
- **Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey**  
(P) 973 467 2100 | [drugfree.nj.org](http://drugfree.nj.org) | [talknownj.org](http://talknownj.org)

Tip content is courtesy of the Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey.

### SOURCES

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- 3 "Understanding Drug Use and Addiction." National Institute on Drug Abuse. Aug. 2016. Web. Sept. 21, 2017. <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/understanding-drug-use-addiction>.
- 4 Stirling, Stephen. "Overdose deaths skyrocket in N.J. as opioid epidemic proves unassailable." NJ.com. 12.07.2016: 4 pages. Web. Sept. 21, 2017. [http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2016/12/overdose\\_deaths\\_skyrocket\\_in\\_nj\\_as\\_opioid\\_epidemic\\_continues\\_its\\_boom.html](http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2016/12/overdose_deaths_skyrocket_in_nj_as_opioid_epidemic_continues_its_boom.html).
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- 7 Nauer, Rick Ph.D. "National Survey Finds Big Jump in Teen Abuse of Prescription Drugs." PsychCentral. April, 24, 2013. Web. Sept. 21, 2017. <https://psychcentral.com/news/2013/04/24/national-survey-finds-big-jump-in-teen-abuse-of-prescription-drugs/54047.html>.

**NEW JERSEY YMCA STATE ALLIANCE**  
[www.njymca.org](http://www.njymca.org)



# TALK CONNECT PREVENT

A Parents Guide to Addressing Drug Use



**NEW JERSEY YMCA STATE ALLIANCE**

# FACTS

Today, the acceleration of drug use to drug addiction can be quick and intense. The numbers are staggering.



Kids who use drugs regularly may graduate to drug abuse and addiction. In fact, heroin use more than doubled among young adults ages 18–25 in the past decade.<sup>1</sup>



Prescribed opioid use before high school graduation is independently associated with a 33% increase in the risk of future opioid misuse after high school, especially among individuals who have little to no history of drug use.<sup>2</sup>



Repeated drug exposure changes a person's brain. Relapse is possible even after undergoing rehabilitation treatment.<sup>3</sup>



In New Jersey, there has been a 214% increase in deaths due to heroin/morphine since 2010.<sup>4</sup>



Nearly 80% of Americans using heroin reported misusing prescription opioids first.<sup>5</sup>



1 in 4 teens report having misused or abused a prescription drug at least once in their lifetime.<sup>6</sup>



More than a quarter of teens (27%) mistakenly believe that misusing and abusing prescription drugs is safer than using street drugs.<sup>7</sup>

# TIPS



## LISTEN

- Take the time to listen to your kids. Find time to be with your child when he/she asks to talk to you. Devote your attention to what your child is saying.
- Ask open-ended questions that encourage conversation.
- Try not to interrupt your children when they are talking and summarize what they are saying to let them know they've been heard.

## TALK

- Make a habit of talking to your kids every day – family dinner is a great place to start.
- Start the conversation – find your own words to raise important topics and find times and places that are comfortable for you to talk, like in the car or on walks or during meals.
- Use events and circumstances in the media and daily life as opportunities to begin conversations.
- Praise and reward your children for their unique qualities as often as you can.

## RULES

- Research shows that young people are less likely to use drugs if their parents set clear rules.
- Tell your children very clearly that you don't want them using alcohol or illegal drugs, or misusing prescription drugs.
- Monitor your child's activities and get to know his/her friends and their parents.
- Establish expectations and family rules that provide parameters for children.

## LIMITS

- Empower your kids and provide guidance to create an action plan that addresses risky situations.
- Safeguard your children from easy access to prescribed medications by taking the American Medicine Chest Challenge at [americanmedicinechest.com](http://americanmedicinechest.com).
- Kids need their own language to help them stay away from drugs – help them develop their own vocabulary.

## TRUTH

- Experts agree that it is best to be honest about your own experimentation with drugs so as not to lose credibility with your child. You may decide that the time is not right to discuss the topic. Provide an appropriate answer based on your child's level of maturity.
- Questions about your past drug use can be a signal that your child is curious, has been exposed to or has tried a substance. Use the question as an opportunity to find out what your child knows about drugs.

## SIGNS

Be aware of signs that may indicate drug use, including:

- Risky behavior
- Slipping grades, lateness, skipping class
- Fights with family/friends
- Change in friends
- Change in mood, or eating or sleeping patterns
- Depressed/less motivation
- Missing prescription or over-the-counter medication
- Missing money/valuables
- Trouble with the law
- Increased candle, incense or air freshener use
- Secretive, deceptive or manipulative behavior
- Neglecting appearance or hygiene
- Sudden change in weight
- Slurred speech
- Skin abrasions
- Chemical smell on breath or clothing
- Glassy or red eyes
- Drug paraphernalia

## AWARENESS

It is important to be aware of potential risk and protective factors. Risk factors may contribute to your child experimenting with alcohol or drugs. Conversely, protective factors contribute to your child's ability to resist alcohol and drugs.

### Risk Factors

- History of addiction in the family
- Poor parental monitoring
- Mental or behavioral problems
- Trauma

### Protective Factors

- A healthy self-concept
- Good parental monitoring
- Strong attachment to school
- Healthy relationships with friends and family

### Action

- If you suspect that your child is using alcohol or other drugs, take appropriate action.
- Have a conversation with your child, recognizing that you may not get honest answers.
- Reach out to individuals in your community who can offer help and advice:
  - Student Counselor
  - Family Physician
  - Local Prevention Specialists
  - Religious Institutions
  - Employee Assistance Program
  - [www.DrugFreeNJ.org](http://www.DrugFreeNJ.org)