

## Talking to teens about drugs & alcohol

**L**ike so many other things in life — and parenthood — helping teens make good decisions about drugs and alcohol comes down to one key overriding skill: good communication. Cigarette and alcohol use are often lower among young people who say their parents are supportive and regularly monitor their behaviors. Teens are listening. The question is what to say.



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### Helping teens make good decisions

**1** As of 2018, U.S. youth drug use was at its lowest levels in decades. But many youth are still using drugs. E-cigarette use has especially been increasing, exposing young people to harmful nicotine addiction.



**2** Parental attitudes have a big influence on teen drug and alcohol use. Three out of 4 teens say their parents are the biggest influence on their decision to drink alcohol.

**3** When to have the drug and alcohol talk with your teen will vary from family to family. Overall, parents should aim to have the conversation before middle school, when kids experiment more.

**4** When you talk to your teen, be honest and a active listener. Acknowledge the gravity of peer pressure in teen life, be nonjudgmental and avoid fear-based language.

**5** Help your teens feel confident in making their own decisions. Give them permission to make you the “bad guy.” And if the first conversation does not go well, don’t give up. It will get easier.



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