



Talking to your child about alcohol

The tips below can help you talk with your child about alcohol and establish boundaries around drinking. Remember, it is best not to wait until your child starts drinking before you talk to them about alcohol.

Talking with your child about alcohol

Do

- Make the first move and bring up the topic of alcohol. Don't wait until there's a problem to talk.
- Make time to listen to what they have to say.
- Respect their views if you want the same in return.
- Discuss the risks associated with drinking alcohol.
- Discuss the possible consequences of their actions and support them to make the right choices.

Don't

- Assume your child doesn't want to talk. Not talking to your child about alcohol could be interpreted as your approval of them drinking.
- Assume they already know everything.
- Interrupt or be judgmental, even if you don't agree with their opinion.

Agreeing alcohol rules and boundaries

Do

- Set realistic rules and boundaries and stick to them.
- Agree rules together with your child. Rules are more likely to be kept if they are negotiated, understood and agreed.
- Discuss why you need the rules. This can help your child see that you care about their wellbeing.
- Reach an agreement on consequences for breaking rules. Make sure it's something fair and appropriate and something you are prepared to follow through on.
- Reward your child when they keep to the set boundaries.

Don't

- Impose rules that you haven't discussed with your child.

If your child comes home drunk

Do

- Stay calm.
- Wait until the next day to discuss things.
- Choose a good time to talk.
- If you're worried, always seek medical advice.

Don't

- Talk things through when your child is under the influence of alcohol.
- Get drawn into arguments.

Supervising your child

Do

- Know who your child is with and what they're doing.
- Show an interest in what your child's interests are, who their friends are, and where they like to hang out.
- Get to know your child's friends – if your child's friends drink alcohol, your child is more likely to drink too.
- Talk to the parents of your child's friends and agree boundaries together.
- When asking about your child's activities, friends and whereabouts – make sure your child knows it's because you care about them, not because you distrust them.
- If you store alcohol in the home, be aware of how accessible it is.

Don't

- Assume other parents have the same ideas as you regarding children and alcohol – find out their views.