

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drugs

**What Everyone
Should Know
About**

An Informational Guide for Foxboro Parents

**Provided by:
Foxborough Public Schools and the
Norfolk County District Attorney's Office**

To Parents and Guardians

This booklet has been developed at the request of many parents seeking information on how to talk to their children about making informed decisions when it comes to tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. It includes information you need to know and tips to help keep your children substance free.

It is never too early to talk with your children. Children are being exposed to these substances at an increasingly younger age. According to the latest Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), nearly one third of 9th graders in Massachusetts reported that they had started drinking before age 13. Parents have an important role to play in educating their children about the negative consequences associated with the use and abuse of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.

Keep in mind

- Young people rank parents among the top reasons for not using tobacco, alcohol or other drugs.
- Peer pressure to experiment with drugs and alcohol is immense.
- Tell your child that you disapprove and it is ok to say "No."
- Everyone is **not** doing it. The majority of teens have never used any illegal drugs in their lifetime (YRBS).
- Be a role model. Remember, children imitate adult behaviors.
- If you ever suspect one of your children is using drugs, confront it head-on by talking to your child.
- Do not be afraid to seek professional help if you suspect your child may be using drugs. See "Where to Get Help," page.
- Be aware that underage alcohol consumption is a serious problem and needs to be actively addressed.

The Devastating Effects of Drug Use

As many reasons as teens find to use alcohol, tobacco or other drugs, there are even more reasons for them not to use. First, these drugs are illegal for teens to use (even if some are not illegal for adults). Second, the effect of alcohol, tobacco and drugs is greater on adolescents than it is on adults.



The use of any drug by teens can have truly devastating effects. Hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine should not be the only cause for concern.

In fact, the major "gateway drugs," alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and inhalants, are all harmful substances themselves. Alcohol poisoning kills teenagers each year, and early alcohol abuse often leads to alcohol-dependency.

- Alcohol decreases reaction time, which can cause car accidents.
- Alcohol and other drug use by teens can also lead to an increased risk of promiscuous sex, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual assault, depression and suicide.
- Smoking and other tobacco use can decrease physical performance and cause heart disease, stroke and cancer.
Over one-third of kids who try cigarettes become addicted.
- More than 60 % of teens in drug treatment are being treated for marijuana dependency. Because marijuana use destroys brain cells, it impairs driving ability and causes decreased motivation and memory loss.
- Oxycontin and heroin are especially dangerous: a single, first time dose can cause brain damage or death, and addiction can occur almost immediately.
- Inhalants can cause serious damage to the central nervous system, permanent brain damage and can even be fatal the first time they are used.

The Adverse Effects of Drugs on the Brain



The adolescent brain is still developing, making teens more susceptible to addiction and less able to make responsible decisions.

- When alcohol affects the hippocampus, the brain center responsible for forming new memories, the brain's ability to learn is affected.
- Alcohol also impairs sleep, which interferes with forming new memories. Alcohol appears to be less sedating for teens than it is for adults, so teens may feel like they are able to drive when in reality their reaction time is severely impaired.
- On a more long term scale, alcohol abuse can disrupt the maturation of a young adult mind. This may cause the prolongation of adolescent responses in adult situations.
- In large enough quantities such as binge drinking, alcohol may cause death. Alcohol poisoning occurs when large quantities "shut down" the parts of the brain that control automatic activities such as breathing.
- Ecstasy and other "club drugs" can cause seizures because they disrupt the brain's ability to regulate body temperature causing the brain temperature to rise. Club drugs also can affect the release of the mood-regulating chemical serotonin.
- Marijuana, which contains the active ingredient THC, impairs the ability to learn and affects the user up to eight days after use. It also causes fear, anxiety, or panic, and withdrawal symptoms may last up to one month.
- Nicotine, found in tobacco products, affects the brain chemistry responsible for thinking and feeling and may cause depression in teens.
- Steroids potentially alter growth patterns and can cause cardiovascular disease. They can also cause aggression, decrease reproduction functions, and damage tendons and cartilage.

Why Teens Use Drugs



With all these negative effects, why do teens begin using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs?

Teens abuse these substances for several different reasons:

- To seek approval from their peers. If other teens are using, they feel they need to use these substances to fit in.
- To make socially awkward situations more comfortable and offer adolescents a feeling of ease and relaxation.
- To appease their curiosity about substances considered to be for adult use only.
- To escape a difficult situation at home, at school or in a troubled relationship.
- To self-medicate if the teen is suffering from depression or experiencing other emotional issues.

Signs of Substance Use

- Physical signs include: bloodshot eyes, dilated or constricted pupils, weight gain or loss, runny nose, dazed look, change in sleeping habits, complaining of frequent illness, feeling depressed.
- Decreased academic performance
- Withdrawn or fatigued
- Hanging out with new friends
- Greater need for money
- Pro-drug attitude, music, clothing, literature
- Alcohol and/or prescription medications missing from home (check your medicine cabinet frequently and don't leave old prescriptions lying around)
- Burning incense
- Lighters, rolling papers or pipes
- Unfamiliar smell on clothing
- Forgetfulness

How to Talk to Your Child About Substance Use



Many parents wait until their child is in high school to discuss tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. High school is too late. It is important not to wait until there is a problem before addressing the issue of drug use with your child. Share your family values with your children, be clear about expectations, and set a firm "no-use" policy.

GET INVOLVED!

- Know your child's friends.
- Encourage your child to be involved in school activities, sports and community service.
- Follow through with consequences when rules are broken. Reward appropriate behavior.

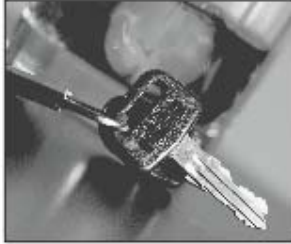
Teachable moments

- If you and your child witness substance use by others, talk about it.
- Read a newspaper article that contains information about a car accident that involved alcohol and discuss it.
- Watch a movie or TV show together and discuss whether substance use was made to look acceptable or whether it shows the negative aspects of use.
- When you see an anti-drug use commercial on TV, use it as an opening to talk to your child about drugs.

Ask your child

- What if the only drink offered at a party has alcohol in it?
- What if you are with a friend who wants to try tobacco, alcohol or other drugs?
- What would you do if you found someone passed out?

Parties



Hosting

Underage drinking can be prevented if parents take an active role in their child's social life. If you are the host of a party, you should set some ground rules:

- Limit the number of guests
 - Establish "off-limits" rooms in your home
 - Establish a time for the party to end
- Remove any family liquor from areas accessible to party guests
 - Be present and visible at the party; never leave the house-not even for a minute
 - Occasionally check on food and soda
 - Backpacks and coats must be left at the door
 - Trust your instincts; Consider checking contents of backpacks if something seems suspicious.
 - Do not allow open cans or containers to be brought into the party
 - Never allow anyone you suspect to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol to drive. Call their parents or have a sober adult drive them home.

Attending

If your child is attending a party elsewhere there are certain measures you can take to ensure your child will not be using, or be in a situation where underage drinking or drug use may be taking place.

- Call the host parents to be sure a parent will be present and get assurance that alcohol and drugs will not be permitted.
- Know your child's transportation plans.
- Verify with the host parents any plans for sleepovers.
- Be wary of impromptu plans to stay overnight.
- Be awake for your child's return or have him/her awaken you. This gives you a chance to assess whether or not your child has been drinking or using drugs.
- Discuss in advance possible situations your child may encounter and how to handle them.
- Choose a "code phrase" to alert you to immediately pick up your teen, no questions asked.

Legal Consequences... Know the Law

It is important for parents to realize that there are serious legal consequences for minors who possess and consume alcohol and other drugs. These consequences can also affect parents if teens drink in their home and are subsequently injured, either by driving drunk or by alcohol poisoning.



Melanie's Law

Melanie's Law was signed into law on October 28, 2005. The new law creates several new offenses intended to crack down on drunk driving.

There are now extra penalties if you or your teen....

- Drives under the influence with a child 14 or younger in the vehicle. Penalties range from 90 days to 5 years in state prison, plus license suspension and fines up to \$10,000.
- Drives under the influence while your license is already suspended for OUI. This offense carries a 1-year mandatory minimum sentence.

In addition, under Melanie's Law, an individual arrested for OUI has his or her license suspended immediately, and the vehicle is impounded for 12 hours.

Social Host Liability

In 2000, Massachusetts passed one of the nation's first social host liability criminal laws. This new law makes it a crime to furnish alcohol to a minor, even if you have taken the minor's keys away, or otherwise made "certain" that he would not be driving that night. When teens use alcohol, there is always a danger that teens might be injured or suffer from alcohol poisoning. And, if you serve alcohol to a teen and he or she does drive away and kill someone, you could be sued as the social host who should have prevented this tragedy.

Legal Consequences... Know the Law

In Massachusetts

If ...Your teenager tries to buy alcohol
with a fake ID...

Then..... License suspended for 180
days, \$300 fine.



If ...A teen transports or possesses alcohol...

Then... License is suspended for 90 days, up to \$150 fine.

If...Your 17 year old refuses to take a breathalyzer test...

Then...They will receive a 3 year license suspension (plus one year*)

If...A young person under age 21 refuses breathalyzer...

Then...They will receive a 3 year license suspension (plus 180 days*)

** Extra suspensions apply if teen refuses to undergo alcohol education program*

If...Your teenager takes the test and "blows" a .02 ...

Then... They are charged with OUI

*.02 Blood alcohol level can be as few as two drinks! License can be suspended
270 days for conviction on first offense if teen is under 18*

If... Your teenager takes the test and "blows" a .20 ...

Then...They are charged with OUI and They are required to partake in
a 14 day inpatient program (plus 18 months outpatient aftercare)

If...Your teenager is arrested for possessing marijuana...

Then...They are sentenced up to 6 months/Fine \$500

If...Your teenager is arrested for heroin possession...

Then...They are sentenced up to 2 years/Fine \$2000

More for 2nd offense

Ways to help your child say “NO” to tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs



At one time or another, all children are confronted with the choice of whether or not to experiment with tobacco, alcohol or other drugs. Here are some tips to help your child handle this difficult situation. Role play with your children so they will be prepared to respond with the right words on the tip of their tongue.

- “My parents will kill me if they find out - and they always find out.”
- “I tried it once and hated the way it made me feel.”
- “No, I am not into that stuff. Do you have any soda?”
- “ I tried drinking once and vomited on everything!”
- “No, my parents will ground me for a month.”
- “No, I want to stay eligible for the team, play, etc...”
- “ My parents trust me and I don't want to break that trust.”
- “I just got my license and don't want to lose it.”
- “No thanks, let's go to the movies, arcade, skate board, play X-Box ,etc....”
- “I hate the smell of tobacco on my clothes.”
- Change the subject - “Do you know if the concert sold out? Did you watch the Patriots game last night?”
- “I have to go now”

Your teen needs to be prepared for persistent offers. Teach them to repeat the reason for saying “no” over and over until the offer is withdrawn. If your child thinks that they are in “over their head,” they should leave. Remember to agree on a prearranged code word or phrase. An example would be: “I have an awful headache.” When your child uses the codeword it means that they want to be picked up immediately, no questions asked.

The most important factor is communication.

Where To Get Help

- **Alateen/Al-Anon**

1-508-366-0556 | www.al-anon.alateen.org

- **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)**

1-617-426-9444 | www.alcoholics-anonymous.org

- **BayState Community Services**

(Mental Health and Substance Abuse Issues)

617-471-8400 Ext: 0 | www.baystatecs.org

- **Center for Substance Abuse Treatment**

1-800-662-4357 | www.csat.samhsa.gov

- **MA Department of Public Health Smokers Quitline**

1-800-879-8678 | www.trytostop.org

- **Massachusetts Substance Abuse Helpline**

1-800-327-5050 | www.helpline-online.com

- **Mothers Against Drunk Driving**

1-800-633-6233 | www.madd.org

- **Narcotics Anonymous**

1-818-773-9999 | www.na.org

- **Norfolk County District Attorney's Office**

781-830-4800 Ext: 212 | www.norfolkda.com

- **Parental Stress Hotline**

1-800-632-8188

What to Look Out For

Cannabis, Stimulants, Narcotics, Club Drugs



Paraphernalia
Blunts
Crack Pipes
Oxycotin
Heroin
Ecstasy
Rohypnol (Roofies)

Photos and Contents Provided by the Norfolk County District Attorney's Office