



NOW IS THE TIME TO TALK ABOUT ALCOHOL

Not yet teenagers but no longer little kids, young adolescents—or tweens—love their increasing independence. But happily for parents, 9-to-12-year-olds still look to you for direction on important decisions.

One of the big decisions your child may face, even at this age, is how to say no to alcohol. The statistics make it clear that your involvement is essential. Why?



According to the 2011 Monitoring the Future Study, nearly one third of 8th graders report they have tried alcohol once in their lifetime and 15% report they have been drunk. To learn more facts about underage drinking please visit www.asklistenlearn.com/parents.

Make no mistake: tweens know what's going on, and they're more than just a little curious about alcohol. "They see it as something exciting," explains Dr. Anthony Wolf, a clinical psychologist and author of *I'd Listen to My Parents if They'd Just Shut Up: What to Say and Not Say When Parenting Teens*. "They're at an age where they're prepared to take more risks. They do not see themselves as little kids."

Not all kids take such risks, of course. But fitting in with their peers is becoming paramount. As your budding children get older, the chances that they'll be exposed to alcohol increase. What to do?

- Give them the information and the support they need to avoid it! Right now they're developing their self-image and long-term habits, so you want them to feel positive about themselves and make healthy choices.
- Let them know they can talk to you about anything. When they do; try to *Ask, Listen, and Learn*, remember to have an open dialogue!
- Give them lots of love and praise.
- Plan family activities and make sure that they are not left unattended or bored.

How to Discuss It

Whether your children raise it or you broach the subject of drinking, when it does come up, make your views utterly clear. Your tweens still care what you think.

Take advantage of daily opportunities to talk, for example:

- Use a scene on a movie, a current newspaper article or an event that involves alcohol as a way of raising the issue.
- Give your reaction to these examples. **Ask** your children for their thoughts. **Listen** carefully, and don't criticize their answers. Make it a discussion, not an argument. **Learn** from each other.

"Kids need to know that if they speak openly, they won't regret it," says Dr. Paul Coleman, a psychologist and author of *How to Say It to Your Kids*. "They don't want to be talked down to. If your children think you're interrogating them, they'll clam up. But if they know it's okay to talk—even disagree—about difficult issues, they'll be less likely to tune out your opinion."

In addition to knowing your opinions, your children also need to know the facts. Tweens are undergoing many emotional and physical changes, and they're fascinated by how their bodies and minds operate. So, without delivering a science report, give your children plenty of information about how alcohol affects them.



The bottom line is that study after study shows parents have the most influence over their children's decision to drink—or not. It's critical you exercise this influence as parents.

Establish Your Values Beyond Any Doubt

Kids can be very literal, and your children may not know how you feel about underage alcohol consumption until you make it perfectly clear. Tell them, "I'm completely against it for kids." Then explain exactly why.

What if you discover your children have experimented with alcohol? "There should be consequences," says Coleman. "Curfews, grounding, or limits on electronic devices use are some possibilities."

On the other hand, if your children come to you with an admission, you don't want to squash that impulse. "If he tells you something and then gets in trouble for it, that's the last time your child will tell you anything," says Wolf. Instead, praise their honesty, but don't let the subject drop without weighing in. Repeat firmly that you disapprove, that it's highly dangerous, and that you expect it never to happen again.

**SAY "YES" to a Healthy Lifestyle
AND "NO" to Underage DrinkingSM**


Want more information on how to help them say YES to a healthy lifestyle and NO to underage drinking?

Visit www.asklistenlearn.com to find additional resources, ideas, games, and activities to share with your child.

THE
CENTURY COUNCIL
FIGHTING DRUNK DRIVING & UNDERAGE DRINKING



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Headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, The Century Council is a leader in the fight to eliminate drunk driving and underage drinking and promotes responsible decision making regarding beverage alcohol. The Century Council develops and implements innovative programs and public awareness campaigns and promotes action through strategic partnerships. Established in 1991, The Century Council's initiatives are highlighted on its website at www.centurycouncil.org.

THE CENTURY COUNCIL would like to thank: American Academy of Family Physicians • American School Counselor Association • Eastern Michigan University • National Association of Secondary School Principals • National Latino Children's Institute • Association for Middle Level Education • United States Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration for providing scientific input and information for use in creating the Ask, Listen, Learn: Kids and Alcohol Don't Mix™ program.