

# TIP SHEET: TEEN ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUG USE

Although experimenting with substances is appealing to some teens, there can be negative consequences including alcohol poisoning, assaults, and addiction.

**Below find tips on how to talk with your teen about substance misuse and strategies to employ if your teen misuses substances.**

## RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF SUBSTANCE MISUSE:

- Changing eating or sleeping habits (more or less than normal.)
- Loss of interest in activities they previously enjoyed.
- New trouble with school or the law (skipping or missing school.)
- Changes in how they talk or act.
- Hanging out with new friends.
- Glassy eyes, slurred speech, chewing minty gum to hide the smell of alcohol, and/or smelling of smoke.

## TALK WITH YOUR TEEN EARLY AND OFTEN:

- Set expectations about substance misuse as early as possible.
- Explain why you are concerned about substance misuse.
  - e.g. substance misuse can impair good judgement and negatively impact brain function.
- Share the possible consequences of substance misuse (grounding, criminal record, school record.)
- Limit stories about your own prior substance misuse.

## LOCK UP AND DISPOSE OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS:

- Safely store prescription opioids, alcohol, and other drugs where they are not accessible to your teen and their friends.
- If you no longer need your prescription medications, dispose of them safely.
  - The Belmont Police Department has a prescription drop-box at **460 Concord Ave.**
- Teens who use prescription opioids recreationally often start misusing prescriptions at home.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOUR TEEN IS USING SUBSTANCES:

- Set firm limits, but be sure to share that these limits are set out of love, care, and concern.
- Follow through with the limits you have set.
- Ask them why they are using substances, and listen to their feedback.
- Listen to and have ongoing conversations with your child.
- Help them find safer, alternative ways to spend their time.
- Work together or with a professional to find new, safer coping skills.

## ENCOURAGE YOUR TEEN TO MAKE GOOD DECISIONS!

- Encouragement can increase your teen's cooperation, self-esteem, and likelihood to make good decisions.
- Praise efforts to make healthy decisions (e.g. "I am proud of how far you have come.")
- Encourage your teen to get involved in new, safer activities with you (e.g. cooking, arts and crafts, community events, walking, or family game nights.)
- Don't dwell on their past mistakes.
- Model responsible behavior around alcohol or other drugs at home.

## GET INVOLVED IN YOUR TEEN'S LIFE:

- Suggest that your teen bring a friend to family events, like birthday parties, cook outs, and dinners.
- Talk with your teen about their friends, school, and activities.
- Have your teen check-in with you while they are out with their friends.
- Be in touch with the parents of your child's friends.
- When your teen is going out, make sure to find out who they will be with, where they will be going, what they will be doing, and what they will be doing.

## RESOURCES

- Massachusetts Substance Use Helpline ([helplinema.org](http://helplinema.org), 1-800-327-5050)
- [Parents: Facts on Teen Drug Use](#)
- SAMHSA 1-800-662-HELP
- [Children's Hospital Adolescent Substance Use & Addiction Programs](#)
- [MGH Addiction Recovery Management Service](#)
- [Contact Sophia at Sophia\\_Suarez-Friedman@WaysideYouth.org](mailto:ContactSophia@SophiaSuarez-Friedman@WaysideYouth.org) for support group options.

## MAIN REFERENCES

- [Prevention Tips For Your High School Aged Adolescent \(Mass.gov\)](#)
- [Prevention Tips for Your Middle School Aged Adolescent \(Mass.gov\)](#)
- [Family Checkup \(National Institute on Drug Abuse\)](#)
- [Majority of Parents with Children at Home Don't Lock up Prescribed Opioids, Study Finds \(ABC New\)](#)
- [The Science of Drug Use and Addiction: The Basics \(National Institute on Drug Abuse\)](#)
- [The Brain and Addiction, Drug Facts, Effects \(NIDA for Teens\)](#)

