

“How do I talk to  
my teen about **alcohol?**”

**Start with  
the facts.**

**The best time to talk to your teen  
about alcohol is *before* they start.**

**Underage drinking, defined as anyone under age 21  
consuming alcohol, is a significant public health problem.**

**A common misperception is that teen alcohol use is “normal” for  
that age group.** This misperception does not take into account that the teenage brain  
physiologically varies from adults. Consequently, alcohol use during the teen years creates the  
foundation for increased risk for immediate and lasting harm. These harms can include changes in  
school performance, motor vehicle accidents, procurement of sexually transmitted diseases, physical  
violence, increased risk of suicide, legal problems, and addiction.\*

**Research suggests that there are a multitude of reasons that increase  
the likelihood of teens alcohol use.** However strong these reasons may be, it is  
important to remember that parents have the most influence on their teen’s decision to use alcohol  
before teens begin to use.

**The following are common signs of teen alcohol use:** mood changes, school  
problems, acquiring a “nothing matters” attitude, physical concerns (lack of coordination, slurred  
speech), and rebelling against family rules.\* It is important to remember that these signs  
can be challenging to identify, as some are common with developing teens. Therefore, it is  
important to talk to your teens using the guidance provided in this toolkit.

### **Under The Influence Of Advertising**

Evidence from long-term studies show that the more often  
teens are exposed to alcohol marketing, the greater the  
likelihood that they will start drinking – or if already drinking –  
that they will drink more (for every alcohol ad viewed,  
teens were shown to drink 1% more).

### **Now That You Know, Where Do You Start?**

Learning these facts is important. But it’s just as crucial to create a plan for an open dialogue and to  
be mindful of engaging your teen with respect. Positive role modeling, compassion and the truth will go  
a long way to help you start acting.

**Use the following steps and resources to start  
your own Communication Action Plan.** ►



### **Fast Facts**

- Parents have the most influence on their teens’ decision to use alcohol.
- Most teens who start drinking before age 21 do so when they are about 13-14 years old.
- Teens who drink are more likely to be victims of violent crime, have serious school-related problems, and be involved in more alcohol-related traffic accidents.
- The 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that among high school students, during the past 30 days:
  - 29% drank alcohol.
  - 14% binge drank.
  - 5% of drivers drove after drinking alcohol.
  - 17% rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol.



# Start Here:



## Tips For Success

- Be empathetic.
- Try to recall what it was like to be a teen.
- Ask questions.
- Be an attentive listener.
- Employ Positive Parenting techniques.
- Avoid criticism.
- Commit to patience.
- Share facts and resources.
- Answer questions.
- Remind and repeat.

## 1 Before You Talk: Be Ready to Listen.

A conversation is a two-way street. Mutual respect, transparency, compassion and hearing what your teen says will go a long way toward giving your facts and position more clout. Your teen started thinking about or using alcohol for a reason. Start there. **IMPORTANT:** No one resource, or document is a magic bullet. Assemble all the available tools at your disposal into your playbook. Start with the great resources offered at the PA Liquor Control Board (PLCB) website: **Know When. Know How.\***

## 2 The Conversation: Look for Your Moment.

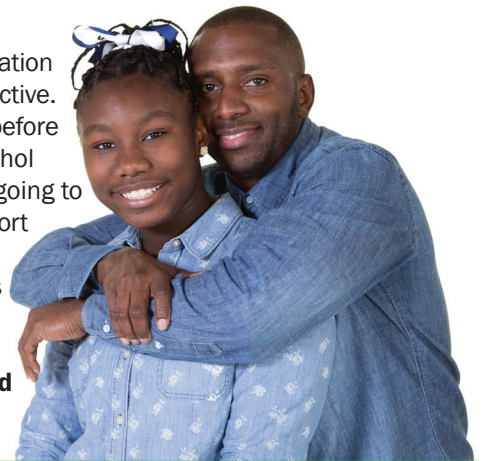
There is no “one size fits all” time or way to initiate a conversation like this. Your teens’ reactions are likely to be affected in part by their age and maturity level. The best results come from collaboration. Watch for the right lead-in. Avoid confrontational tendencies. Having patience and empathy will build trust. The Partnership to End Addiction breaks down the steps to have an effective conversation in this Intervention e-book: **What To Do If Your Child Is Drinking Or Using Drugs\***

## 3 You've Gotten Their Attention: Now What?

Your teen may be using or contemplating using alcohol for a variety of reasons. Find out what he or she thinks they know about alcohol. Chances are they are unaware of the vast potential harm. Provide answers to their questions and dispel myths. Appeal to their good judgment. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration offers a question-and-answer information sheet that can facilitate a factual and healthy discussion related to alcohol. **Answering Your Child's Tough Questions\***

## 4 Great Start: Don't Stop!

All these pieces can help to formulate a communication plan for you and your teen, but alcohol can be addictive. Research suggests that teens that begin drinking before age 15 have a 41% chance of struggling with alcohol dependence later in life. One talk is probably not going to be enough. Your teen is going to need ongoing support to help them quit. Keep the lines of communication open and the conversation alive. Discover resources together and encourage them to be part of the process. One resource available to help your teen feel empowered to quit is the **Substance Abuse And Mental Health Services National Helpline\***



Regardless of all the resources that alcohol companies pour into their marketing and lobbying efforts, the truth is out there and available. All these tools and more are available on the **PASart.org/Alcohol**. Use our collection of links and materials to create a strategy that will engage and empower you and your teen. They're all designed to help you get started.



*\* For an expanded set of additional resources, all data citations and bonus interactive materials, click on the QR code above or visit [pastart.org/alcohol](https://pastart.org/alcohol)*

## Learn More. **PASart.org**

**CPA** Commonwealth Prevention Alliance

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