

Helping Teens Avoid Alcohol Abuse During the Holidays

During the holiday season, accidents caused by alcohol consumption increase, and teen abuse of alcohol increases as well – if for no other reason than adult usage increases, which in turn increases teenagers access to the substance. Whether or not your teen has abused alcohol in the past, there are steps you can take to help protect him or her from the risks associated with drinking during the holidays. Here are just a few:

Don't allow teen alcohol use in any amount. Some parents are permissive about alcohol use among teens all year but even parents who are stricter may relax and agree to either look the other way when teens drink or outright permit teen drinking. Don't do it. Some teens may start behaviors that are permitted during the holidays, creating a year-round issue, and those who have a problem with the behavior already may be confused by the changing attitudes and movement of boundaries.

Provide supervision at family gatherings and neighborhood parties. Family functions and holiday parties are common during this time of year, and while adults hit the eggnog, kids may sneak a few drinks of their own. Make sure that you make your expectations of behavior clear to your teens, offer them alternative entertainment, and ensure that there is proper supervision whether or not you intend to drink at these events.

Talk to your teen about avoiding alcohol use. Discussing the behaviors you expect from your teen over the holiday season will set them up for success. Should they decide to break the rules, make sure that the consequences are clear – and follow through. Set the precedent now for the behavior that you expect for the rest of the year.

Set up a "bailout" plan for your teen. In some cases, your teen may find themselves in a situation where their designated driver is no longer in a condition to drive. It's important that he or she feel safe enough to call you for a sober ride, even with the understanding that you don't condone their drinking or the drinking of their friends. Make it clear that it's not worth the risk for them to accept a ride with someone who is impaired for any reason and that you will make sure they get home safely without reprimand.



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