

40 Tips for Raising Drug-Free Kids

- Teach about information on label of prescription medications (name, date, dose, expiration date, etc.)
- Teach about not sharing medications and not taking medications from others except parents, a doctor, or a babysitter with parental permission
- Dispose of unused medications properly and lock up medications and alcohol. Give the message that they are dangerous to children.
- Have family meals together as often as possible.
- Use positive reinforcement when your child has made a good choice or handled a situation well.
- Give a clear message that no illegal drug use is allowed in your home. Reinforce often.
- Raise children to believe that it's your family rule to follow the law. Inform them of consequences of failure to do so (police involvement, courts, jail).
- Explain law that adults over age 21 can drink alcohol legally but it is against the law for people under the age of 21.
- Consider creating a culture of no alcohol use in your home and not drinking in their presence so they will not be desensitized.
- Consider not allowing family/friends to use alcohol in the presence of your children.
- Explain rationale for adults using alcohol on holidays, and serve children grape juice.
- Do not allow children to even taste alcohol. Doing so gives the message that you approve. Be consistent in your messages.
- Be a good role model regarding health, following the law, and substance use.
- Get professional help if you need it.
- Educate them about family history of addiction and their risk.
- Teach the difference between tattling and reporting. Set the expectation that siblings should report on each other about risky behaviors.
- Role play difficult situations. "What would you do if..."
- Look for "teachable moments." Share stories from the newspaper, television news, people you know. Watch people who are smoking and discuss health risks.
- Monitor and restrict access to media as long as possible.

- Get professional help early. Children with mental health problems often become adolescent substance abusers because they self-medicate.
- Educate yourself so you can teach your children.
- Take parenting classes to learn how to communicate effectively with your children.
- Ask questions about their activities when you were not present.
- Call parents of their friends, inquire of their rules, and define “supervision.”
- Encourage only healthy friendships. Give permission to end unhealthy friendships.
- Encourage assertive behavior and saying “no” when uncomfortable, even to adults.
- Teach how to avoid peer pressure and being mean to others.
- Set rules for your child far in advance so they grow up knowing the rules.
- Teach healthy ways to relax, cope, and combat boredom--exercise, listen to music, talk to a friend, instead of “I had a rough day. I need a drink.”
- Educate!!! Root beer is pop-that’s ok to drink. Rubbing alcohol is for wounds-do not touch.
- Empower them to think for themselves (haircut, food choices, clothing, classes, activities).
- Have a code word your child can use to inform you he needs to be picked up from an uncomfortable situation with no questions asked.
- Share stories of your life and good choices.
- Use visits to the doctor/dentist/vaccinations as examples of ways to take care of their bodies.
- Teach them to stop and think before acting.
- Greet your teen when he/she returns home with a hug. Smell him/her and look in his/her eyes.
- Teach them who the “helping people” are in their home, school, and community.
- Teach them about good and bad touching, and “Stranger Danger.” Children who have been sexually abused have a higher likelihood of growing into adult substance users.
- Have a drug test at home “just in case it’s needed.” This may serve as a deterrent.
- Hold them accountable for their behavior. This increases their sense of responsibility.