



Girls and Drug Abuse

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Your daughter may only be eight or nine, but she needs to know about drugs, alcohol, and tobacco and what to do if she is offered them. You may think that your daughter is too young to experiment with these substances, and you're probably right. However, she'll most likely come into contact with them before you expect her to.

Young girls are drinking earlier and more than they have in the past. Recent studies show that young girls are drinking and using tobacco and drugs at a higher rate than boys their age, although all underage use is decreasing.

The best and most trusted source of information for young girls is their parents and other caring adults involved in their lives. When adults start talking to children early about the dangers of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco and how to say no, they are more likely to be heard and to be listened to.

What You Can Do

- Start early. Talk about the dangers of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco early and often.
- Set an example. Don't abuse substances or let anyone else do so in front of your daughter.
- Help build your daughter's self-confidence. Praise her strengths and accomplishments and be careful with your criticisms.
- Teach her healthy ways to manage stress, such as exercising or talking about problems with you or with a friend.
- Be aware that the media often glamorizes alcohol, drug, and tobacco use in movies, programs, and songs geared to teenagers and young children. If you see any examples of this, talk to your daughter and explain the consequences of that behavior.
- When talking about drugs, alcohol and tobacco with children, focus on the immediate consequences. Most children aren't concerned with the possibility of lung cancer in the future but will worry about having yellow teeth, stinky clothes, and not being able to run as fast or as far. Explain that alcohol can cause you to get sick, act dumb in front of friends, and gain weight.
- Teach her your values. The more she knows how you feel about drugs and alcohol, the more likely she will be to listen to your advice.