

Respect Yourself - Stay in control



**WHY
LET
DRINK
DECIDE**

Information for Parents

Why let drink decide?

Alcohol may not seem like a concern for your family. But it can leave your children vulnerable.

The facts speak for themselves:

- Six thousand children under 16 are admitted to hospital every year because of drinking.
- Young people who drink regularly are twice as likely to miss school, get poor grades and get a criminal record.
- Alcohol can also lead young people to make bad decisions. One in seven 16 - 24 year olds have had unprotected sex after drinking alcohol.

England's Chief Medical Officer has advised that children aged under 15 should never drink alcohol, even in small quantities. It is healthiest for your children not to drink alcohol until they are 18 years old.

The best way to protect your children from alcohol is to talk to them about it. You might find it difficult to believe, but you are one of the most important influences on what your children think and do.



Top tips on talking to your children about alcohol

Don't wait

Children are aware of alcohol from an earlier age than you might think. So don't be tempted to think that your own child is too young to know about alcohol. You should certainly be talking about it by the time your child makes the move to secondary school.

Be honest

Be prepared to talk openly about your own attitude to alcohol, how much you drink and why you drink. Your child is bound to want to talk about this.

Look for openers

The effects of alcohol often pop up in news stories, films and soaps. These all offer opportunities for talking about alcohol in your home. Or why not broach the topic in an everyday situation such as giving your child a lift in the car?

Don't forget to listen

Try asking your child what they understand about alcohol rather than telling them what you know. Get a conversation going. If there are questions you don't know the answers to, look them up together with your child.

Keep talking

Your child has to cope with many issues as they grow up. Try to get in the habit of talking with your child about all of them – including alcohol.

Pick your moment

If your child has drunk alcohol, pick your moment to talk to them about it. It's not a good idea to talk to your child about alcohol when they're drunk or have a hangover. Wait until they are in a receptive mood.

Set boundaries

Similarly, if your child is drinking alcohol, set some clear limits to the use of alcohol by your child and let them know why you are doing it. Explain what, when and how much you think it is appropriate for them to drink. Involve them in a discussion so they know you've taken their views into account. Then stick consistently to the rules you've set.

One key thing to remember to say...

Make sure that your child knows that your number one concern is for their safety. You should always follow through on the consequences if they break your rules around alcohol use. But let them know that consequences always take second place to their safety. That way they will be more ready to talk to you if there's a problem.

One key thing to remember to do...

Look at your own alcohol use and ensure it's sending out the right messages to your child. Young people learn as much from seeing what their parents do as from listening to what they say. It is helpful to set an example to your child by creating some boundaries around your own use of alcohol.

Staying SAFE

If your child is going out for the night, ask them to do some simple things to reduce the risk of falling into harm's way:

Say where they are going

- Your child should let you, as well as their friends, know where they are going, and when they are coming home

Agree how they are getting home

- Ask your child to plan their night before they go out and keep money aside so they can get home
- Make sure they have a phone number for a trusted taxi company.
- Tell them never to get into a car if you know the driver has been drinking.

Find help

- Advise them to avoid aggressive people and walk away from someone who wants a fight. Young people should not be shy of talking to a police officer if they feel threatened
- If your child becomes worried that one of their friends has had too much to drink, encourage them to find a responsible adult or call an ambulance

Everyone counts

- Encourage them to keep close to at least one friend and never leave one of their friends out alone.



Further information

The best way to protect your children from alcohol is to talk to them about it.

For more information please visit:

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/alcohol

www.respectyourself.info

If you are concerned about a young person's drinking please call the Warwickshire Young Persons Substance Misuse Service on freephone 08000 887248

**TACKLING
DRUGS
& ALCOHOL
CHANGING
LIVES
IN WARWICKSHIRE**

