

Healthy Teens

February 2019 Parent Newsletter



What if I Think My Teen is Experimenting with Drugs?

Many young people will try alcohol, tobacco, cannabis or other drugs at some point in their lives. Experimentation is a natural part of growing up. However, using any drug is still illegal for minors and is harmful to young brains and bodies. What can you do to support your teen?

Communicate: Keep lines of communication open with your teens. Ask questions, make it safe for them to ask you questions, and learn as much as you can about the risks and consequences of using mind-altering substances. Tell your teen the truth about the consequences.

Know the signs: Changes in school performance, attitudes

towards sports and other activities, changes in weight, eating or sleeping habits and changes in friends may signal alcohol or drug use or abuse.

Talk about the changes: Talk to your teen about the changes you see in them. Use concrete examples of these changes. Explain your concerns in non-judgmental terms. Avoid assumptions; ask them why they think the changes are happening instead of assuming that they are using drugs.

Stay connected: By knowing where your kids are, what they are doing and who they are hanging out with, you increase the chances they will not become harmfully involved with drugs.

Articles

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Parents Matter: Getting involved in your teens school experience

One of the most common things that people identify as a benefit of smoking is stress relief. But did you know that many studies show that smoking can actually increase stress? What smoking does is relieve nicotine withdrawal symptoms, which can be stressful, but this is only short term.

Quitting is hard, but it is easier with help. You can call AlbertaQuits at 1-866-710-QUIT or visit www.AlbertaQuits.ca



Parents Matter: Getting involved in your teen's school experience

As your teen grows, you may feel like you need to back away from their school experience. Keep in mind there's a fine line between encouraging their independence and separating yourself from the school altogether! Research confirms that it's a good idea for parents to keep an active role in education, even as kids get older. Youth with engaged parents tend to have positive attitudes toward school and learning, earn higher grades and stay motivated.

Here are some examples of how you can get involved in your teen's school experience:

- Stay in the loop – follow classroom blogs, read e-newsletters and subscribe to text-messaging services offered by your school or board. Use online platforms to find information like class schedules, assignments and absences.
- Make time for parent-teacher conferences, school council meetings or school-wide events like student performances.



- Talk about what's going on at school. Sometimes a casual chat in the car or over an evening snack can help everyone feel comfortable. Try creative questions like *tell me about the best part of your day or what happened at school that was funny or surprising?*
- Help plan for life after graduation – post-secondary school, career, travel and other adventures that are still to come! Learn how you can support a healthy transition to adulthood.

If your hectic schedule makes it hard to be engaged at the school, reach out! Principals and teachers know that good schools get even better when

parents are involved, and most are looking for new ideas about how to be flexible for families. Some schools offer “coffee and conversation” evening events so that parents can meet with school staff in a casual atmosphere. Others host workshops to help parents understand curriculum, explore post-secondary options or learn about hot topics for youth.

For more information, check out Alberta Education's brief video about family engagement to support mental health in schools. It's the third video in a four-part series:

<https://education.alberta.ca/mental-health/information-and-resources/everyone/videos/>