

TALKING TO TEENS ABOUT DRINKING

Talking to your teens about drinking may not be easy. One way to overcome the challenge is to think about talking about alcohol not as a separate conversation, but as part of the on-going dialogue you have as a family. Your strategies should come out of the rulebook for good parenting. ([10 Principles for Parenting Your Teen from Iowa State](#) is a good starting point, click on the title to link to the article.)

Over time, weave this conversation into your daily conversations.

- Set your expectations and values.
- Understand teen's attitudes about drinking. **For them, alcohol is the party.**
- **Control your own emotions.** You're initiating a conversation that will encourage your teen to be open with you so you can help them make the right choices.
- Ask what they know about alcohol and what they think about drinking.
- Debunk the myths.
- Share the facts, including your family's history, especially if there is a history of alcohol or drug dependency.
- Watch the video [Empowering Parents to Prevent Underage Drinking in New Jersey](#). It's especially good if you're unsure about how to start the conversation with your teen. Consider watching it together.
- Talk about the reasons not to drink. Of course, they know that underage drinking is illegal; that the younger a person starts drinking, the more likely they will have a dependency problem as an adult; drinking lowers a person's social inhibitions, making them less able to make good decisions; and the risk of accidental death.
- Consequences should be clear. At the same time, tell them about New Jersey's [911 Lifeline Legislation](#). If they call 911 about a friend who needs help, there will be no negative consequences for them, as long as they remain with the friend.
- Help them figure out how to say "no" to drinking comfortably, and maintain their self-esteem.
- Get to know your teen's activities, their friends and their friends' families.
- Encourage healthy relationships.

Don't only talk. Your actions and behavior are an important model for your teens. Think about what part alcohol plays in your family's life. Create some alcohol-free celebrations. Make sure that you don't drink and drive, that someone is the designated driver.

Don't only talk to your teen, have the conversation with younger children as well.

If you think your teen has a problem, get help for them, reach out to a doctor or a counselor ([click here to find resources to help](#)). Encourage your teen to do the same for their friends.