

EVERYDAY CHALLENGES:

CHILDREN AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

A long-standing problem in our society, substance abuse has plagued children and adults since early times. There is no question that this societal problem is one of the biggest issues our children will encounter as they grow up. According to a Study by the Canadian Institute of Child Health:

- 54% of children and youth aged 10-19 in Canada say that they drank alcohol in the past year.
- The risk of starting to smoke increases steadily between 12 and 17 years of age.
- 31% of current male smokers and 26% of current female smokers reported that they began smoking before they were 12 years old.

Health Canada's study entitled, 'Health Behaviour in School Aged Children', found that:

- At the grade six level, more boys than girls tend to smoke, but by grade ten, significantly more females than males had tried smoking.
- By grade ten, nearly two-thirds of the respondents in the study had tried smoking.
- 44% of boys and 41% of girls reported using marijuana more than three times before grade ten.
- 85% of respondents who said their friends smoke also smoke themselves.
- 88% of those who said their friends take drugs take drugs themselves.
- Relatively few students engage in health risk behaviours when they are not associated with a group of health risk takers.

The names of the drugs may have changed from our youth experiences, but the problem has not. As parents, we are constantly trying to help our children make drug free life choices. CCA's commercial series and support materials for substance abuse prevention aim at helping young people to learn how to make positive choices as they grow to become healthy, caring young Canadians. Check out our substance abuse commercials on www.cca-kids.ca.

Meanwhile, the following tips are designed to provide tools as you help your child make responsible choices about substance use.

TIPS FOR PARENTS:

HELPING YOUR KIDS STAY DRUG FREE

The following tips are gathered from research about children and substance abuse prevention. Think of them as a checklist of what you are probably already doing to keep you child drug free!

- **Know Your Child's Friends.**
Have your children's friends over for dinner, take them to a movie, talk to them, listen to them. You may be surprised what you find out.
- **Explain Your Family Values.**
Tell your children how you feel about issues that directly affect their life and their future. Make it clear that you expect them to honour these family choices and monitor them frequently.
- **Investigate for Yourself.**
There is no shortage of valid, correct information about drugs. Investigate for yourself. Ask questions. Use the Internet, books, pamphlets, help lines. Consult your local Addictions Centres and ask for information. Arm yourself with your own information, before believing anyone else's. Be certain that if your child asks you a question, you either know the answer or can steer them towards accurate information.
- **Talk About It.**
Talk about your concerns with reference to drug use. Let them know that you feel strongly about certain things and give reasons for your feelings. Try to engage in 'two-way' discussions.
- **Brainstorm Safe, Healthy Activities.**
Brainstorm some fun and exciting things that your children and their friends can do that are safe, and drug free. Channel their energies into activities they like. You would be surprised what they might enjoy. (And so will they!)
- **Identify Safe, Healthy Hangouts.**
Talk to your children about where they like to 'hang out'. Do some research of your own to find out if this is a safe environment for your child. If not, suggest some alternatives.
- **Be a Friend.**
While engaging in frequent discussions with your children, they may share some sensitive information with you. The important thing to remember is that if they made a safe and healthy choice, it is time to recognize and celebrate. Let them know how proud you are that they have matured and learned to make substance free life choices! Congratulate yourself too!



TIPS FOR KIDS ON STAYING DRUG FREE

- **Know Your Friends.**

Get to know what your friends like to do. What is their attitude towards drug use? Are they risk takers? Do they represent the kind of person you want to be?
- **Set Your Standards.**

Let others know how you feel about issues that directly affect your life and your future. Make it clear that you intend to stick to your own choices.
- **Get The Facts.**

There is no shortage of valid, correct information about drugs. Investigate for yourself. Ask questions. Use the Internet, books, pamphlets, help lines. Consult your local Addictions Centres and ask for information. Arm yourself with your own information, before believing anyone else's.
- **Load Up Your Tool Kit.**

Have a variety of ways to say “no” when you are asked to try something you aren't sure about. See the ‘Tips to Avoid Negative Peer Pressure’ and try them out!
- **Talk About It.**

Don't let someone else tell you what you should try. Be vocal about your feelings concerning harmful or unknown substances. Who knows? You may actually be able to convince a friend to say “no”!
- **Find Alternate Highs.**

If feeling good is what you're after, why not enjoy something that will make you feel good and not harm your health? Cook dinner for your family, read a great book, watch your favourite TV show, go biking. Remember – you can choose your own highs!
- **Choose Healthy Hang Outs.**

Use your common sense to avoid putting yourself in a dangerous position. Stay away from places that are known as ‘drug hang outs’.
- **Avoid the ‘Big Three’ Drugs.**

Alcohol, tobacco and marijuana are the three most available drugs for young people. Some research also says that taking these drugs can lead to other drug dependencies later in life.

Avoid all drugs, and recognize the danger of the common ones as well as those you hear about less often.