

# Prevention *for parents*



## Marching Toward Better Decisions

According to the 2018 Healthy Youth Survey, about 83% of Washington 10th graders who report having clear family rules around substances don't drink alcohol.

This means the conversations you have at home are really making a difference, even if it seems like your teen isn't listening.

Make sure your

teen knows what your expectations are and what the rules are in your family.



When they know what is expected, and rules are enforced, they are more likely to make better decisions.

Make sure you let your teen know why the rules are in place, too. Are you worried about the

health impact of using substances? Their risk of addiction? The harm to their still-developing brains?

Whatever the reason, teens appreciate when it's authentic and they know you care.



### Points of Interest

- *When teens know the rules they make better decisions. What are your family rules about substance use?*
- *Healthy risk taking helps prevent substance use*
- *Teen brains are more likely to become addicted*

## Healthy Risk Taking May Deter Substance Use

There are many factors at play when teens make the decision to use substances, and not all teens use for the same reason.

But, one of the common reasons teens may try a substance is for

the thrill of it. Risk taking is normal teen behavior— they are hard wired for it. This helps them gain independence and become adults.

However, they don't always think (or care)

about the consequences of their risks. Our job can be to help steer them toward healthy risks with fewer consequences. Here are a few ideas:

- Joining a club



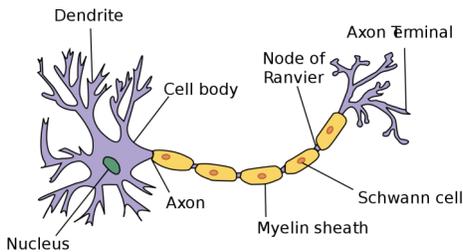
- Asking someone out on a date
- Making a new friend
- Learning a new skill
- Playing a sport

# Teens Brains are More Susceptible to Addiction

Did you know the teen brain is more likely to become addicted to substances?

Our brains aren't finished growing until we're about 25 years old. During adolescence, our neurons are carrying out myelination—a process where our brain cells are coated in a layer of fat to protect them.

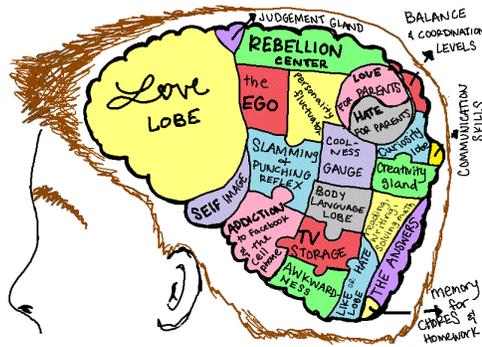
When teens use



substances— before their neurons are well protected— their neurons can be damaged.

We also know that the teen brain is busy making connections throughout adoles-

## THE AVERAGE TEENAGE BRAIN



brain to develop is the frontal lobe—the area responsible for decision making, judgment, and impulse control. This makes them more interested in risk-taking behaviors, like trying substances.

More risk taking behaviors coupled with a higher susceptibility for addiction can be a dangerous combination.

However, we know most teens choose not to use substances. Have a conversation with them about their heightened risk of addiction and encourage healthy risk taking behaviors instead.

ence. This means that their brains are figuring out how to connect to other areas and pathways are being set.

This is a great thing for learning because their brains are able to shift and absorb more information than adults.

However, it also means their brains can learn to become addicted faster, stronger, and longer than adults.

The last area of their

## What Would You Like To See In The Next Issue?

Contact Colleen Chan with any suggestions, comments, or questions.

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## Parent Resources

### Start Talking Now

<https://www.starttalkingnow.org/parents>

### Brain Facts.org — Video on Teen Brain Development (3 min.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8sO4tqfUEs>

### Why Teens Need Risk to Thrive and Grow

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/youth-and-tell/201107/risky-business-why-teens-need-risk-thrive-and-grow>