

Talk Early, Talk Often... Keep Talking

PRESCHOOL



Vitamins help you stay healthy, but you should only take what I give you.

If you give your child a daily vitamin – or you take one – use this as a teachable moment.



In the car, you have a captive audience to start the conversation.



During meals, take time to talk to your child – research shows that children who have dinner with their families are less likely to drink alcohol or use other substances.



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



You should only take medicines that your doctor has chosen for you. If you take someone else's medicine, it could be dangerous and make you sick.

Show your Rx bottle to your child. Explain the risks of taking medicine that is not theirs.



Your brain is still developing. Alcohol and other substances can cause permanent damage to a developing brain. You can perform at your best if you are substance free.

What should you say when your preteen or teen asks, 'Why is it okay for you to drink but not me?'

When watching a TV show together, address any substance use shown.



MIDDLE + HIGH SCHOOL



Together, we can prevent youth substance use

TIPS FOR YOUTH MILESTONES

Preschool

Talking early is essential, but short bits of information work best – you don't want to give preschool children more information than they are ready for.

"You were very brave and I'm proud you tried something new."

Focus on their positive skills and the good aspects of a situation.

Elementary School

Talk to your kids about substance-related messages they receive through advertisements, the news and social media—use these to start the conversation.

"The commercial listed many side effects, that's why it's important never to take someone else's medication."

When they are about to enter middle school, let your child know that you recognize it will be a change. Tell them you have confidence in them and that you will be there to offer support.

Middle + High School

Get to know the parents of your teen's friends. Check in and keep the lines of communication open.

Give teens an "out" from situations where substance use is present. Make a plan with them, such as having them text a code word to a family member so that person can call/text back right away with a message like: ***"Something has come up and I have to come get you now. Be ready in 5 minutes."***

"Substances like alcohol and marijuana are illegal for young people because they negatively affect your growing mind and body."

Keep talking about house rules. Kids are less likely to use alcohol or other substances if their parents have established clear rules and follow through with consequences for breaking those rules.

College + Job

Base substance-related messages on facts, not fear. Teens want to know the science.

Encourage teens to make their own decisions against peer pressure. Explain that underage drinking or other substance use can result in a criminal record, loss of college scholarships or restrictions of professional licensing and certifications.

"The National Academy of Sciences publishes studies. Let's check out their website together for the best information."

If asked about your past substance use, acknowledge the risks you took and the consequences you may have experienced. Be prepared to answer such questions in ways that do not suggest that underage substance use is permissible.



**Southern Midcoast
Communities for
Prevention**

www.smcpcme.org

Serving Sagadahoc County, Brunswick, and Harpswell.