

model good behavior

Sometimes, without realizing it, adults can show attitudes and behaviors that may make alcohol use seem more appealing to a teen. While it is never a parent's intent to encourage underage drinking, some actions may do just that. Here is a checklist of attitudes and behaviors that may contribute to your teen's use.

Consider whether your answer is "Often," "Sometimes," or "Never" for each question:

1. Do you make lighthearted or joking comments about other people's heavy drinking? (e.g., "She holds her liquor well!")
2. Do you tell funny or glorified stories about you or your friends' drinking antics when you were younger?
3. Do you ask your child to get you an alcoholic drink from the fridge?
4. Do you wear t-shirts, baseball caps, etc. that advertise or promote drinking and/or specific brands of alcohol ?
5. When watching television with your child, do you laugh at scenes where alcohol is being abused?
6. Do you host adult social gatherings at your home where alcoholic beverages are the only drinks served and/or where drinking is the central focus of the gathering?
7. Do you assume that alcohol is a necessary part of any celebration or social gathering?
8. Do you model using alcohol as a stress reduction tool? (e.g., "I've had a long day, I need a drink!")
9. Do you offer alcohol to your teen as a way to celebrate special occasions?
10. Do you host parties at your house where alcohol is served or available to teens?
11. Does your teen observe you drinking several drinks on any one occasion?
12. Does your teen observe you driving after drinking?

If you answered "often" or "sometimes" two or more times, you might be unintentionally sending mixed messages to your child that imply it's OK for him or her to drink or experiment with alcohol. By glamorizing alcohol use, you also send the message that it is a rite of passage and expected. Teens, and even young children, are quick to pick up on these messages even when that is not your intention. Remain clear and consistent about rules, and avoid messages that glamorize or promote alcohol use. These are good ways to provide your children with the role modeling they need to stay away from drugs and alcohol.

This brochure was adapted from material created by the Maine Office of Substance Abuse.



Five Tips for Preventing Underage Drinking

Tip 1 Limit Access

- 0 **GOOD:** If you have alcohol and prescription drugs in your home, keep track of them - know what and how much you have - and keep it where it is not accessible to teens.
- 0 **BETTER:** Ask young adult relatives not to provide your teen with alcohol.
- 0 **BEST:** Alert the police if you have information about where or how teens are getting alcohol in your community.

Tip 2 Network

- 0 **GOOD:** Get to know your teen's friends.
- 0 **BETTER:** Get to know the parents of your teen's friends. Know their rules so you don't have to just accept the argument "everybody else is allowed to..."
- 0 **BEST:** Let the parents of your teen's friends know your rules, and where you stand on underage alcohol use - no drinking or supplying alcohol, ever.

Tip 3 Reinforce and Enforce

- 0 **GOOD:** Reinforce the rules and consequences of underage drinking with your teen.
- 0 **BETTER:** Explain the reasons behind the rules so your teen understands the rules are a protective measure, not just a restriction on their freedom.
- 0 **BEST:** Enforce your rules consistently. Don't look the other way if your teen violates the rules. Your teen needs to know that you are serious and that he or she will be held accountable for violating them.

Tip 4 Check In Often

- 0 **GOOD:** Before your teen goes to a party or gathering, ask if adults will be there and call the host to make sure alcohol will not be available.
- 0 **BETTER:** Ask your teen to call you from the party or gathering. If you have caller ID, ask him or her to use a land line, not a cell phone so that you can tell where your teen actually is at that time.
- 0 **BEST:** Trust but verify; check in with other parents about your teen's activities or drop by occasionally.

Tip 5 Be Awake and Be Ready

- 0 **GOOD:** Wait up, or set the alarm for curfew time - talk with your teen about their night.
- 0 **BETTER:** Know the signs of alcohol and drug use. Teens who believe their parents would find out about their substance use are less likely to drink.
- 0 **BEST:** Plan in advance what you would do if you discover that your teen has been drinking or using drugs. Determine ahead of time how you want to react, how you would enforce the consequences, and who you would turn to for support or guidance if necessary.