

ACTION TIPS FOR PARENTS



ACTION TIPS FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS – TALKING ABOUT ALCOHOL, CANNABIS AND OTHER DRUGS:

- Start having **ongoing conversations about alcohol, cannabis and other drugs** – before your kids reach the teenage years. Conversations can start with basic topics like what they see on television – you can build up from there.
 - **Don't lecture, be calm, talk & actively listen.**
 - Keep an **open mind** and try to **understand** what they are experiencing in life.
 - Be **supportive and express concern** – it is counterproductive to be shameful, angry or use scare tactics.
 - Set **limits & rules**
 - Let them know they can talk to you if they are worried about their own substance use or someone else's use – **it's about safety.**
- **Talk about a wide range of topics**, not just about substance use. **Invite them to offer their opinions**, even if they are different than yours. **Find out what they think about cannabis use.**
- **Check in with them, find out** who they are hanging out with and **get to know their friends.**
- **Spend time** with them & **keep them busy.**
- **Stay in the know** – there are many myths about cannabis. Have the information to help them make informed choices (www.drugfreekidscanada.org/). Be aware of Canada's **Low Risk Drinking Guidelines & Lower Risk Cannabis Guidelines**. Inform yourself with the evidence.
- **Set goals & revisit – what do you want to gain from the conversation?** Not all conversations will go well, but it is important to learn from the experience and follow-up.
- **Set an example** – be responsible with your own use. Children are watching and learning from you.
- **Be aware experimentation and mistakes happen** – teenage brains are still growing, including their impulse control. Turn the mistake into a discussion and learning opportunity – be rational.
- **Seek help if needed:** The teenage years can be a vulnerable period and may lead to mental health challenges such as anxiety, stress and depression. They may cope with these emotions with substances. If you think your teen is experiencing problems seek professional help.