



EMPOWERING PARENTS TO RAISE
THEIR CHILDREN TO BE SUBSTANCE-FREE

Talk Early And Often About Alcohol, Tobacco And Other Drugs. Even When It Gets Tough

Know! – Mind and Body Wellness for Prevention

When it comes to preventing substance use among youth, parents are the first line of defense. By keeping the lines of communication open and talking to your child often about the dangers of substance use, you can actually cut his/her risk in half. But what about the other 50 percent?

Just as there are many factors that play a role in adolescent alcohol and other drug use, there are also a variety of action steps parents can take to further reduce our children's risk for use as they navigate through middle school and into their teenage years.

One major contributor to substance use among youth is STRESS. As discussed in the previous Parent Tip: [Know! The Challenges and Changes of Middle School](#), middle school students' stress levels heighten as academic and athletic expectations increase, responsibilities rise and the pressure to fit in skyrockets.

While children should know that experiencing some amount of stress is normal and should be expected, an overwhelming amount of stress is unhealthy and can quickly take a toll on their developing minds and bodies.

Adolescent stress must be effectively managed, and parents can help. Here are five tips to assist in keeping your child's stress levels in check:

- **Help Your Child Slow Down:** While this may be easier said than done, it is important to plan regular downtime in your child's schedule for relaxing and recharging.
- **Encourage Enjoyable Exercise:** While many tweens are getting plenty of exercise through their sports and such, many others are not. Aside from the obvious physical health benefits are the mental health benefits. Exercise releases feel-good endorphins that relieve stress, promote an overall feeling of well-being and contributes to more restful sleep.
- **Make Sleep A Priority:** Sleep fuels the brain. When insufficient amounts of sleep occur, stress increases; kids become grouchy and irritable, their level of alertness declines, thinking becomes clouded and they may struggle to remember, concentrate and make good decisions. Lack of sleep is associated with a variety of health-risk behaviors, including drug and alcohol use.

Recommended Sleep Based on Age (according to the National Sleep Foundation):

- *School-Aged (5 to 10): 10 to 11 hours*
- *Tweens/Teens (11 to 17): 8 ½ to 9 ¼ hours*
- *Adults: 7 to 9 hours*

Talking regularly with kids about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using.

Know! urges you to encourage other parents to join Know!.

[Click here for the Know! Parent Tip Sign-Up Page.](#)

Know! is a program of:



*Lifetime Prevention
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- **Help Them Eat Well:** This means children eating breakfast everyday and not skipping meals, regularly incorporating fruits and vegetables in their diet and making sure they are staying hydrated (with water, not soda). A little indulgence on the junk food is okay, but it needs to be limited.
- **Keep Your Tween Talking:** Bottled-up, negative emotions can wreak havoc on an adolescent's thought process, leading to poor choices with dangerous and sometimes deadly consequences. Encourage your tween to talk about his/her problems, either with you or a trusted friend, teacher or counselor.

As stress increases, the natural desire for relaxation and relief increases. By helping tweens manage their stress in healthy ways, you will reduce their risk of turning to alcohol and other drugs in an attempt to achieve that relief.

Source: Palo Alto Medical Foundation: Managing Your Stress. National Sleep Foundation: How much sleep do we really need?