



USEP-OHIO PARENT TIP: Signs Your Child Drinks

This brief Parent Tip is provided at no cost by United Services for Effective Parenting-Ohio, Inc. as a tool to assist parents, teachers, grandparents and all who help to care for and to raise our children. For more information on this and other tools from USEP-OHIO refer to the conclusion of this Parent Tip.

Alcohol is the #1 drug of choice for children and adolescents in America.

Parents, grandparents, teachers and others in our children's lives need to know the warning signs, so they can take action and make a difference in their children's lives and in their present and future health.

Drinking is correlated with risky behaviors of all kinds. Children who drink are much more likely to act out sexually, violently and in a myriad of ways that endanger themselves and others.

Their academic performance is often impaired. Alcohol is linked with youthful deaths by drowning, suicide, and homicide.

Alcohol affects motor coordination, impulse control, memory, and judgment. The impacts on health include possible damage to every organ of the body including the developing brain.

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, children who drink before the age of 15 years are five times more likely than those who start after age 21 to have alcohol problems as adults.

Their 2004 National Survey on Drug use and Health found that -
Among 12 year olds, 1 in 16 reports using alcohol in the last year.
Among 14 year olds, the rate jumps to more than 1 in 4! Picture about 15 students on a full size school bus loaded with 9th graders.

Signs to watch for:

- Mental Changes – Memory lapses and poor concentration
- Emotional Changes – Mood changes, flare-ups, irritability, defensiveness; a “nothing matters” attitude
- Physical Changes – Low energy, bloodshot eyes, lack of coordination, slurred speech
- Behavioral Changes – School problems, poor attendance, tardiness, low grades, and/or disciplinary action; rebelling against family rules; switching friends, along with reluctance to let parents get to know the friends, sloppy appearance, a lack of involvement in former interests

What parents can do:

- Talk with your child about the dangers and what you expect from them if offered alcohol.
- Get involved with your child; encourage participation in supervised groups and events.
- Be a positive role model; watch what you do and say and how you act with kids present.
- Teach your kids to choose friends wisely and how to form positive relationships.
- Set the rule – no riding with drinking drivers; determine whom to call if needed.

Go to <http://www.family.samhsa.gov/hottopics> for much more about “what parents can do” and ideas for dealing with your child. There are videos and detailed help on each topic listed above.

We invite you to share this USEP-OHIO publication with other parents, students and professionals at home or work. You have permission to copy Tips as written, send on as email, or print for a newsletter or handout. Email usepohio@usepohio.com or call 1-800-262-4KIDS to add email addresses to our list, to give us feedback about how the information works for you, or for other topics, publications and programs.