Talk to your kids about alcohol

While the legal age to consume alcohol is 18, the average age adolescents in Alberta have their first drink of alcohol, which is more than a sip, is 13 years and five months. This is important because the earlier in life a person starts to drink, the greater the risk of drinking problems in the future.

You can have a positive impact by having open conversations with your child and setting healthy boundaries and clear expectations.

You are the role model

Children tend to mimic the behaviour of those they love and admire, especially their parents.

Peer pressure is a factor in adolescent drinking, but often, youth drink for the same reasons as adults, including sociability, relaxation, and fun.

People may also drink alcohol to avoid problems, relieve anxiety or stress, or to get drunk. Talk with your children about other strategies to manage difficult times or strong emotions.

Refusal Skills

Practice these strategies with your children, so they feel comfortable saying no when they are offered alcohol or other substances:

"No thanks, I don't want to." Your child can repeat this as often as needed when they feel pressured; they can repeat saying this in a friendly, neutral manner.
"Sorry, I have to leave." This may be the best way to get out of a tricky situation.
Let your children know they can always say no to something that makes them uncomfortable. which will relieve them of a lot of the pressure.

How to have a conversation about alcohol

Be brief and neutral when explaining the facts about alcohol to your child; discuss the pros and cons. Explain the difference between drinking in moderation and alcohol misuse.

Encourage questions and expect to be asked about your drinking and experiences. Listen with full attention so your child can talk.

Try to understand your child's point of view and avoid lecturing to keep the conversation going.

MORE RESOURCES

Parent Information Series | Alberta Health Services

Teen Health (alberta.ca)