

## AAP News Parent Plus

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

### ‘Kids do listen’ when parents tell them not to drink

When teens consider whether to drink alcohol, they may be influenced by friends and advertising. But most actually say their parents play the biggest role in their decision.

“Kids do listen to them and even though they might pretend they don’t,” said Lorena M. Siqueira, M.D., M.S.P.H., FAAP, a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics’ Committee on Substance Abuse.

U.S. adolescents abuse alcohol more than any other substance, and rates spike in high school.

Roughly 79% of youths have tried alcohol by 12th grade. Of those who drink, half of those 12-14 years old and almost three-fourths of those 18-20 drink heavily. Because youths’ bodies typically are smaller than adults, some can become intoxicated with as few as three drinks in two hours.

Parents who suspect their children are drinking can watch for these signs: slurred speech, impaired judgment, lack of coordination, confusion, agitation, nausea, vomiting and depression. Drinking also can lead to risky decisions like having unprotected sex. It is linked to car crashes, homicides and suicides, the leading causes of death and serious injury for adolescents.

When children learn about the dangers of drinking, they may be swayed more by immediate consequences like fatal alcohol poisoning. Long-term, those who binge drink are more likely to develop alcohol dependence and could suffer from liver disease, heart disease, stroke and cancer.

The AAP offers the following advice:

- Talk to children as young as age 9 about the dangers of drinking.
- If a teen is attending a party, make sure an adult will be present and alcohol will not be served.
- Talk with your child in advance about how to handle scenarios in which alcohol is present.
- Do not allow teens to drink in your home even if you are there.
- Make sure your children know they can count on you for a ride home if they need to leave a party.
- Parents don’t need to abstain from alcohol but should drink responsibly.

— *Melissa Jenco*

