



# BRIGHT FUTURES HANDOUT ► PATIENT

## 11 THROUGH 14 YEAR VISITS

Here are some suggestions from Bright Futures experts that may be of value to you and your family.

### ✓ HOW YOU ARE DOING

- Enjoy spending time with your family. Look for ways to help out at home.
- Follow your family's rules.
- Try to be responsible for your schoolwork.
- If you need help getting organized, ask your parents or teachers.
- Try to read every day.
- Find activities you are really interested in, such as sports or theater.
- Find activities that help others.
- Figure out ways to deal with stress in ways that work for you.
- Don't smoke, vape, use drugs, or drink alcohol. Talk with us if you are worried about alcohol or drug use in your family.
- Always talk through problems and never use violence.
- If you get angry with someone, try to walk away.

### ✓ YOUR GROWING AND CHANGING BODY

- Brush your teeth twice a day and floss once a day.
- Visit the dentist twice a year.
- Wear a mouth guard when playing sports.
- Be a healthy eater. It helps you do well in school and sports.
  - Have vegetables, fruits, lean protein, and whole grains at meals and snacks.
  - Limit fatty, sugary, salty foods that are low in nutrients, such as candy, chips, and ice cream.
  - Eat when you're hungry. Stop when you feel satisfied.
  - Eat with your family often.
  - Eat breakfast.
- Choose water instead of soda or sports drinks.
- Aim for at least 1 hour of physical activity every day.
- Get enough sleep.

### ✓ HEALTHY BEHAVIOR CHOICES

- Find fun, safe things to do.
- Talk with your parents about alcohol and drug use.
- Say "No!" to drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and e-cigarettes, and sex. Saying "No!" is OK.
- Don't share your prescription medicines; don't use other people's medicines.
- Choose friends who support your decision not to use tobacco, alcohol, or drugs. Support friends who choose not to use.
- Healthy dating relationships are built on respect, concern, and doing things both of you like to do.
- Talk with your parents about relationships, sex, and values.
- Talk with your parents or another adult you trust about puberty and sexual pressures. Have a plan for how you will handle risky situations.

### ✓ YOUR FEELINGS

- Be proud of yourself when you do something good.
- It's OK to have up-and-down moods, but if you feel sad most of the time, let us know so we can help you.
- It's important for you to have accurate information about sexuality, your physical development, and your sexual feelings toward the opposite or same sex. Ask us if you have any questions.

# 11 THROUGH 14 YEAR VISITS—PATIENT



## STAYING SAFE

- Always wear your lap and shoulder seat belt.
- Wear protective gear, including helmets, for playing sports, biking, skating, skiing, and skateboarding.
- Always wear a life jacket when you do water sports.
- Always use sunscreen and a hat when you're outside. Try not to be outside for too long between 11:00 am and 3:00 pm, when it's easy to get a sunburn.
- Don't ride ATVs.
- Don't ride in a car with someone who has used alcohol or drugs. Call your parents or another trusted adult if you are feeling unsafe.
- Fighting and carrying weapons can be dangerous. Talk with your parents, teachers, or doctor about how to avoid these situations.

Consistent with *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*, 4th Edition

For more information, go to <https://brightfutures.aap.org>.

American Academy of Pediatrics

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# Tips for Parents of Adolescents



Adolescence is a time of change and challenge for your preteen or teenager. The changes that occur during adolescence are often confusing not only for your son or daughter, but for you as well. Though these years can be difficult, the reward is watching your child become an independent, caring, and responsible adult. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) offers the following tips to help you face the challenges of your child's adolescence:

- 1. Spend family time with your adolescent.** Although many preteens and teens may seem more interested in friends, this does not mean they are not interested in family.
- 2. Spend time alone with your adolescent.** Even if your teen does not want time alone with you, take a moment here and there to remind him that your "door is always open," and you are always there if he needs to talk. Remind him often.
- 3. When your adolescent talks**
  - Pay attention.
  - Watch, as well as listen.
  - Try not to interrupt.
  - Ask him to explain things further if you don't understand.
  - If you don't have time to listen when your child wants to talk, set a time that will be good for both of you.
- 4. Respect your adolescent's feelings.** It's okay to disagree with your child, but disagree respectfully, not insultingly. Don't dismiss her feelings or opinions as silly or senseless. You may not always be able to help when your child is upset about something, but it is important to say, "I want to understand" or "Help me understand."
- 5. When rules are needed, set and enforce them.** Don't be afraid to be unpopular for a day or two. Believe it or not, adolescents see setting limits as a form of caring.
- 6. Try not to get upset if your adolescent makes mistakes.** This will help him take responsibility for his own actions. Remember to offer guidance when necessary. Direct the discussion toward solutions.

"I get upset when I find clothes all over the floor,"  
is much better than, "You're a slob."

Be willing to negotiate and compromise. This will teach problem solving in a healthy way. Remember to choose your battles. Some little annoying things that adolescents do may not be worth a big fight—let them go.

- 7. Criticize a behavior, not an attitude.** For example, instead of saying,

"You're late. That's so irresponsible.  
And I don't like your attitude,"

try saying,

"I worry about your safety when you're late. I trust you, but when I don't hear from you and don't know where you are, I wonder whether something bad has happened to you. What can we do together to help you get home on time and make sure I know where you are or when you're going to be late?"

- 8. Mix criticism with praise.** While your teen needs to know how you feel when she is not doing what you want her to do, she also needs to know that you appreciate the positive things she is doing. For example,

"I'm proud that you are able to hold a job and get your homework done. I would like to see you use some of that energy to help do the dishes after meals."

- 9. Let your child be the adolescent he wants to be, not the one you wish he was.** Also, try not to pressure your adolescent to be like you were or wish you had been at that age. Give your teen some leeway with regard to clothes, hairstyle, etc. Many teens go through a rebellious period in which they want to express themselves in ways that are different from their parents. However, be aware of the messages and ratings of the music, movies, and video games to which your child is exposed.

- 10. Be a parent first, not a pal.** Your adolescent's separation from you as a parent is a normal part of development. Don't take it personally.

- 11. Don't be afraid to share with your adolescent that you have made mistakes as a parent.** A few parenting mistakes are not crucial. Also, try to share with your teen mistakes you made as an adolescent.

- 12. Talk to your pediatrician if you are having trouble with your adolescent.** He or she may be able to help you and your child find ways to get along.

The following is additional information you may find helpful in understanding some of the life changes and pressures your adolescent may be experiencing.



## Dieting and body image

***"My daughter is always trying new diets.  
How can I help her lose weight safely?"***

We live in a society that is focused on thinness. Adolescents see many role models in fashion magazines, on television, and in the movies that emphasize the importance of being thin. This concern about weight and body image leads many adolescents, especially girls, to resort to extreme measures to lose weight. Be aware of any diet or exercise program with which your child is involved. Be watchful of how much weight your child loses, and make sure the diet program is healthy. Eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa can be very dangerous. If you suspect your child has an eating disorder, talk to your pediatrician right away. Ask about the brochure from the AAP called *Eating Disorders: What You Should Know About Anorexia and Bulimia*.

Many diets are unhealthy for adolescents because they do not have the nutritional value that bodies need during puberty. If your teen wants to lose weight, urge her to increase physical activity and to take weight off slowly. Let her eat according to her own appetite, but make sure she gets enough fats, carbohydrates, protein, and calcium.

Make sure your teen is not confusing a "low-fat" diet with a "no fat" diet. Teens need 30% of their calories from fat, and cutting fat out of the diet altogether is not healthy. A low-fat diet should still include 30 to 50 grams of fat daily. Many teens choose vegetarian diets. If your child decides to become a vegetarian, make certain she reads about it and becomes an educated vegetarian. She may need to see her pediatrician or a nutritionist to ensure that she is getting enough fat, calories, protein, and calcium.

Many adolescents are uncomfortable with their bodies. If your adolescent is unhappy with the way she looks, encourage her to start a physical activity program. Physical activity will stop hunger pangs, create a positive self-image, and take away the "blahs". Unfortunately, some teens may try to change their bodies by dangerous means such as unhealthy dieting (as discussed previously) or with drugs such as anabolic steroids. Encourage healthy exercise. If your child wants to train with weights, she should check with her pediatrician, as well as a trainer, coach, or physical education teacher. Help create a positive self-image by praising your child about her appearance. Set a good example by practicing what you preach. Make exercise and eating right a part of your daily routine also.

### Nutrition

The growth rate during adolescence is one of the most dramatic changes the body ever goes through. It is very important for your adolescent to have a proper diet. Follow these suggestions to help keep your teen's diet a healthy one

- Limit fast food meals. Discuss the options available at fast food restaurants, and help your teen find a good balance in her diet. Fat should not come from junk food but from healthier foods such as cheese or yogurt. Vegetables and fruit are also important.
- Keep the household supply of "junk food" such as candy, cookies, and potato chips to a minimum.
- Stock up on low-fat healthy items for snacking such as fruit, raw vegetables, whole-grain crackers, and yogurt.
- Check with your pediatrician about the proper amounts of calories, fat, protein, and carbohydrates for your child.
- As a parent, model good eating habits.

## Dating and sex education

***"With all the sex on television, how can I teach  
my son to 'wait' until he is ready?"***

There are constant pressures for your adolescent to have sex. These pressures may come from the movies, television, music, friends, and peers. Teens are naturally curious about sex. This is completely normal and healthy. Talk to your adolescent to understand his feelings and views about sex. Start early and provide your teen with access to information that is accurate and appropriate. Delaying sexual involvement could be the most important decision your child can make. Talk to your teen or preteen about the following things he needs to think about before becoming sexually active:

**Medical and physical risks**, like unwanted pregnancy and STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) such as

- Gonorrhea
- Syphilis
- Chlamydia
- Herpes
- Hepatitis B
- HIV, the virus that causes AIDS

**Emotional risks**—that go along with an adolescent having sex before he is ready. The adolescent may regret the decision when he is older or feel guilty, frightened, or ashamed from the experience. Have your adolescent ask himself, "Am I ready to have sex?" "What will happen after I have sex?"

**Methods of contraception**—Anyone who is sexually active needs to be aware of the various methods of contraception that help prevent unintended pregnancies, as well as ways to protect against sexually transmitted diseases. Remember to tell your teen that latex condoms should always be used along with a second method of contraception to prevent pregnancy and STDs.

**Setting limits**—Make sure your adolescent has thought about what his limits are before dating begins.

**Most importantly, let your adolescent know that he can talk to you and his pediatrician about dating and relationships.** Offer your guidance throughout this important stage in your teen's life.

The following AAP brochures may help your teen in dealing with these difficult issues: *Deciding to Wait and Making the Right Choice: Facts For Teens on Preventing Pregnancy*.

### If you smoke... quit

If you or someone else in the household smokes, now is a good time to quit. Watching a parent struggle through the process of quitting can be a powerful message for a teen or preteen who is thinking about starting. It also shows that you care about your health, as well as your child's.



**"My daughter smokes behind my back.  
How do I convince her to quit?"**

Smoking can turn into a lifelong addiction that can be extremely hard to break. Discuss with your adolescent some of the more undesirable effects of smoking, including bad breath, stained teeth, wrinkles, a long-term cough, and decreased athletic performance. Addiction can also lead to serious health problems like emphysema and cancer.

"Chew" or "snuff" can also lead to nicotine addiction and causes the same health problems as smoking cigarettes. Mouth wounds or sores also form and may not heal easily. Smokeless tobacco can also lead to cancer.

If you suspect your teen or preteen is smoking or using smokeless tobacco, talk to your pediatrician. Arrange for your child to visit the pediatrician, who will want to discuss the risks associated with smoking and the best ways to quit before it becomes a lifelong habit. Smokers young and old often are more likely to listen to advice from their doctor than from others.

## Alcohol

**"I know my son drinks once in a while,  
but it's just beer. Why should I worry?"**

Alcohol is the most socially accepted drug in our society, and also one of the most abused and destructive. Even small amounts of alcohol can impair judgment, provoke risky and violent behavior, and slow down reaction time. An intoxicated teenager (or anyone else) behind the wheel of a car is a lethal weapon. Alcohol-related car crashes are the leading cause of death for young adults, aged 15 to 24 years.

Though it's illegal for people under age 21 to drink, we all know that most teenagers are no strangers to alcohol. Many of them are introduced to alcohol during childhood. If you choose to use alcohol in your home, be aware of the example you set for your teen. The following suggestions may help:

- Having a drink should never be shown as a way to cope with problems.
- Don't drink in unsafe conditions—driving the car, mowing the lawn, using the stove, etc.
- Don't encourage your child to drink or to join you in having a drink.
- Never make jokes about getting drunk; make sure that your children understand that it is neither funny nor acceptable.
- Show your children that there are many ways to have fun without alcohol. Happy occasions and special events don't have to include drinking.
- Do not allow your children to drink alcohol before they reach the legal age and teach them never, ever to drink and drive.
- Always wear your seatbelt (and ask your children to do the same.)

**"I am afraid some of my daughter's friends  
have offered her drugs. How can I help  
her make the right decision?"**

Your child may be interested in using drugs other than tobacco and alcohol, including marijuana and cocaine, to fit in or as a way to deal with the pressures of adolescence. Try to help your adolescent build her self-confidence or self-esteem. This will help your child resist the pressure to use drugs. Encourage your adolescent to "vent" emotions and troubles through conversations and physical activity rather than by getting "high."

Set examples at home. Encourage your adolescent to participate in leisure and outside activities to stay away from the peer pressure of drinking and drugs. Talk with your children about healthy choices.

For more information on tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, visit the AAP Web site at [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org), or ask your pediatrician about the following AAP brochures:

*Alcohol: Your Child and Drugs*

*Cocaine: Your Child and Drugs*

*Marijuana: Your Child and Drugs*

*Smoking: Straight Talk for Teens*

*Steroids: Play Safe, Play Fair*

*The Risks of Tobacco Use: A Message to Parents and Teens*

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From your doctor

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# Alcohol and Your Child: What Parents Need to Know



One of the most abused drugs in the United States is alcohol. It's also a drug that many people start using at a very young age. Though it's illegal for people younger than 21 years to drink, many children are introduced to alcohol well before they reach that age. The earlier they begin using alcohol, the higher risk they will have for problems with it later in life. Here is information from the American Academy of Pediatrics to help parents understand the dangers of alcohol and how to prevent alcohol use.

## Why parents should worry

- Between 36% and 50% of high school students drink alcohol, and 28% to 60% report binge drinking.
- In 2014, half of 12th graders and one in nine 8th graders reported having been drunk at least once in their life.
- More than 4,300 people younger than 21 years die each year as a result of underage drinking.
- Adolescents who start drinking before 15 years of age are at 4 times the risk of developing alcohol use disorder as those who start drinking after 20 years of age.
- 80% of adolescents say their parents are the biggest influence on their decision to drink or not.

Alcohol is often the first drug that young people try. Since alcohol is legal for those older than 21 years and found in most American homes, it's often easy for children to be around alcohol and its use. Some parents may feel relieved when they find out their teen is "only" drinking alcohol. They may even think it isn't dangerous. Not true! Alcohol can harm your child's normal brain growth and development. Also, if young people like the feeling they get from alcohol, they may be interested in trying other drugs as well.

## Risks linked to alcohol use

Even if a person drinks alcohol only occasionally, it can play a part in a variety of risky behaviors. Just one drink can impair decision-making and slow down reaction time. Underage drinking is not legal and is also linked to

- Early sexual activity, multiple partners, unintended pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections, including AIDS.
- Drunk driving. Among 15- to 20-year-olds, nearly a third of all fatal automobile crashes involve alcohol.
- Use of other drugs, such as marijuana or cocaine.
- Health concerns like stunting brain growth, liver damage, hormone imbalances, and addiction to alcohol.
- School problems, such as poor grades and dropping out.
- Injuries that can be deadly or cause long-term problems.
- Crime, violence, and safety concerns.

## Why young people drink

Here are some reasons why young people drink.

- Out of curiosity. They have heard that getting drunk is fun, and they want to find out for themselves.

- As a rite of passage. They see drinking as "something everyone does on the way to adulthood."
- To get drunk. This explains why teens drink until they are out of control. Binge drinking (having at least 4–5 drinks within 2 hours) is alarmingly common.
- To "fit in" with friends who drink.
- To feel relaxed and more confident.
- To escape problems, such as depressed feelings, family conflicts, or trouble in school or with a boyfriend or girlfriend.

## Stages of alcohol use

The same pattern of use exists for alcohol as with other drugs, such as marijuana or cocaine. The following table shows how experts explain the stages of alcohol use. Keep in mind that even if your child doesn't meet criteria for substance use disorder (SUD), all underage drinking is risky. For example, binge drinking, at any stage of use, is very dangerous and should not be condoned.

Stage	Description
Abstinence	The time before an individual has ever used alcohol more than a few sips.
Substance use without a disorder	Very limited use that does not meet the definition of an SUD. The most common problems associated with adolescent substance use (car crashes, unintentional injuries, sexual trauma) can all occur with limited use in teens without an alcohol use disorder.
Mild-moderate SUD	Use in high-risk situations, such as when driving or with strangers. Use associated with a problem such as a fight, arrest, or school suspension. Use for emotional coping, such as to relieve stress or depression. Defined as meeting 2–5 of the 11 criteria for an SUD in <i>DSM-5</i> .*
Severe SUD	Loss of control or compulsive drug use associated with neurologic changes in the reward system of the brain. Defined as meeting 6 or more of the 11 criteria for an SUD in <i>DSM-5</i> .*

\*Doctors use the *DSM-5* (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition*) to assist in diagnosing mental disorders, including SUD (substance use disorder).

## How can I tell if my child is drinking?

Certain symptoms and behaviors are warning signs for alcohol use. Look for

- Alcohol odors on your child's breath or clothing
- Alcohol in your child's room or backpack



- Obvious intoxication, dizziness, or bizarre behavior
- Changes in dress and grooming
- Changes in choice of friends; alcohol use by your child's friends
- Frequent arguments, sudden mood changes, and unexplained violent actions
- Changes in eating and sleeping patterns
- Loss of interest in activities
- School problems, such as declining or failing grades, poor attendance, and recent discipline problems
- Runaway and delinquent behavior
- Talk about depression or suicide; suicide attempts

## How to prevent alcohol use

Here are ways parents can help their children resist alcohol use.

- Boost confidence and self-worth by praising your child often for what she does well. Avoid constant criticism.
- Listen to what your child says. Pay attention and really listen. Be helpful during periods of loneliness or doubt.
- Know the facts and correct any wrong beliefs your child may have, such as "everybody drinks."
- Know who your child's friends are, and set clear limits. Do not support friendships with others whose parents do not set similar limits. Real friends do not urge their friends to break the rules, such as drinking alcohol, or reject them if they don't. Insist that a parent be at any party your child attends. Don't let your teen go to parties where alcohol is served.
- Make promises. Have your child promise never to get in a car when the driver has been drinking. You must promise your child that you will always be willing to pick him up, no questions asked, when a safe ride home is needed. Promise each other you will talk about it the next day.
- Help your child deal with emotions. Let her know that strong emotions are normal. She can express strong emotions in healthy ways. Talk about concerns and problems. Assure your child that everything has an upside, and things do not stay "bad" forever. Be a good role model in the ways you express, control, or relieve stress, pain, or tension.
- Talk about things that are temptations and those that are important to your child. Talk about school and your child's need for peer-group acceptance. Discuss life goals and desires. Talk about the risk of using alcohol and drugs and how that might prevent reaching those goals. Teach children exactly how you expect them to respond if someone offers them alcohol.
- Encourage healthy ways to have fun. Family activities, sports and physical activities, interests in the arts, and hobbies can all be good uses of leisure time.
- Use teachable moments. Discuss tragedies resulting from alcohol use that are reported in the news. Ask your child what he thinks happened in the story and how tragedy could have been prevented.
- Join your child in learning all you can about preventing alcohol abuse. Programs offered in schools, churches, and youth groups can help you both learn more about alcohol abuse.
- Your child's doctor understands that good communication between parents and children is one of the best ways to prevent alcohol use. If talking with your child about alcohol is difficult, your child's doctor may be able to help open the lines of communication. If you suspect your child is using alcohol or any other drug, ask your child's doctor for advice and help.

## Alcohol and the media

No matter how often they hear how dangerous it is to drink alcohol, many young people today still think it's cool. A big reason for this is the media. Alcohol companies spend billions of dollars every year promoting their products on TV, in movies and magazines, on billboards, and at sporting events. In fact, alcohol products are among the most advertised products in the nation.

Alcohol ads never mention the dangers, such as alcoholism and drinking and driving, or how it affects an unborn infant (fetal alcohol syndrome). Most ads show drinkers as healthy, energetic, sexy, and successful. Ads are trying to boost sales of a product, so this product—alcohol—is made to look as appealing as possible!

Here are tips on how parents can address issues related to alcohol and the media.

- Talk about ads with your children. Help them understand the sales pitch—the real messages in these ads.
- Teach your children to be wary consumers and not to believe everything they see and hear on TV.
- Make sure the TV shows and movies your children watch do not show drinking alcohol as cool or glamorous.
- Don't let your children wear T-shirts, jackets, or hats that promote alcohol products.
- Talk with your children's school about starting a media education program.

## Parents who drink alcohol

Parents who drink should be careful how alcohol is used at home. Having a drink should never be shown as a way to cope with problems. Don't drink in unsafe conditions—before or while driving a car, mowing the lawn, boating, etc. Don't encourage your child to drink or join you in having a drink. Parents who are problem drinkers or who use alcohol often and in large amounts place their children at increased risk of alcohol dependence. Studies show that alcoholism runs in the family, so children of alcoholic parents are more likely to become alcoholics.

## About teen confidentiality

All teens should be screened for alcohol and other drug use as part of routine medical care. Your child's doctor will want to ask questions about alcohol in private to get honest answers. If your child reports alcohol use, the doctor will determine whether your child needs very brief advice, a return visit, or a referral to a specialist. Every doctor will have his or her own policy about what information must be shared with a parent and what will stay confidential (between the patient and the doctor), but most doctors will protect a teen's confidentiality if they believe the teen's drug use is not an immediate safety risk to the child or others. It is important for you to respect the doctor's decisions about confidentiality to encourage your child to have an open and honest discussion with the doctor.



## Prescription Drug Abuse

Angie overheard her parents talking about how her brother's ADHD medicine was making him less hungry. Because Angie was worried about her weight, she started sneaking one of her brother's pills every few days.

Todd found an old bottle of painkillers that had been left over from his dad's operation. He decided to try them. Because a doctor had prescribed the pills, Todd figured that meant they'd be OK to try.

Both Todd and Angie are taking risks. Prescription painkillers and other medications help lots of people live more productive lives, freeing them from the symptoms of medical conditions like depression or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). But that's only when they're prescribed for a particular individual to treat a specific condition.

Taking prescription drugs in a way that hasn't been recommended by a doctor can be more dangerous than people think. In fact, it's drug abuse. And it's just as illegal as taking street drugs.

### Why Do Some People Abuse Prescription Drugs?

Some people experiment with prescription drugs because they think they will help them have more fun, lose weight, fit in, and even study more effectively. Prescription drugs can be easier to get than street drugs: Family members or friends may have them. But prescription drugs are also sometimes sold on the street like other illegal drugs.

Prescription drug abuse continues to rise. In 2012, 24% of teens surveyed said they have taken a prescription drug without a doctor's prescription.

Why? Some people think that prescription drugs are safer and less addictive than street drugs. After all, these are drugs that moms, dads, and even kid brothers and sisters use. To Angie, taking her brother's ADHD medicine felt like a good way to keep her appetite in check. She'd heard how bad diet pills can be, and she wrongly thought that the ADHD drugs would be safer.

But prescription drugs are only safe for the individuals who actually have prescriptions for them. That's because a doctor has examined these people and prescribed the right dose of medication for a specific medical condition. The doctor has also told them exactly how they should take the medicine, including things to avoid while taking the drug — such as drinking alcohol, smoking, or taking other medications. They also are aware of potentially dangerous side effects and can monitor patients closely for these.

Other people who try prescription drugs are like Todd. They think they're not doing anything illegal because these drugs are prescribed by doctors. But taking drugs without a prescription — or sharing a prescription drug with friends — is actually breaking the law.

### Which Drugs Are Abused?

The most commonly used prescription drugs fall into three classes:

#### 1. Opioids

- **Examples:** oxycodone (OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin), and meperidine (Demerol)
- **Medical uses:** Opioids are used to treat pain or relieve coughs or diarrhea.
- **How they work:** Opioids attach to opioid receptors in the central nervous system (the brain and the spinal cord), preventing the brain from receiving pain messages.

#### 2. Central Nervous System (CNS) Depressants

- **Examples:** pentobarbital sodium (Nembutal), diazepam (Valium), and alprazolam (Xanax)
- **Medical uses:** CNS depressants are used to treat anxiety, tension, panic attacks, and sleep disorders.



- **How they work:** CNS depressants slow down brain activity by increasing the activity of a neurotransmitter called GABA. The result is a drowsy or calming effect.

### 3. Stimulants

- **Examples:** methylphenidate (Ritalin) and amphetamine/dextroamphetamine (Adderall)
- **Medical uses:** Stimulants can be used to treat narcolepsy and ADHD.
- **How they work:** Stimulants increase brain activity, resulting in greater alertness, attention, and energy.

### Over-the-Counter Drugs

Some people mistakenly think that prescription drugs are more powerful because you need a prescription for them. But it's possible to abuse or become addicted to over-the-counter (OTC) medications, too.

For example, dextromethorphan (DXM) is found in some OTC cough medicines. When someone takes the number of teaspoons or tablets that are recommended, everything is fine. But high doses can cause problems with the senses (especially vision and hearing) and can lead to confusion, stomach pain, numbness, and even hallucinations.

### What Are the Dangers of Abusing Medications?

Whether they're using street drugs or medications, drug abusers often have trouble at school, at home, with friends, or with the law. The likelihood that someone will commit a crime, be a victim of a crime, or have an accident is higher when that person is abusing drugs — no matter whether those drugs are medications or street drugs.

Like all drug abuse, using prescription drugs for the wrong reasons has serious risks for a person's health. Opioid abuse can lead to vomiting, mood changes, decrease in ability to think (cognitive function), and even decreased respiratory function, coma, or death. This risk is higher when prescription drugs like opioids are taken with other substances like alcohol, antihistamines, and CNS depressants.

CNS depressants have risks, too. Abruptly stopping or reducing them too quickly can lead to seizures. Taking CNS depressants with other medications, such as prescription painkillers, some over-the-counter cold and allergy medications, or alcohol can slow a person's heartbeat and breathing — and even kill.

Abusing stimulants (like some ADHD drugs) may cause heart failure or seizures. These risks are increased when stimulants are mixed with other medicines — even OTC ones like certain cold medicines. Taking too much of a stimulant can lead a person to develop a dangerously high body temperature or an irregular heartbeat. Taking several high doses over a short period of time may make a drug abuser aggressive or paranoid. Although stimulant abuse might not lead to physical dependence and withdrawal, the feelings these drugs give people can cause them to use the drugs more and more often so they become a habit that's hard to break.

The dangers of prescription drug abuse can be made even worse if people take drugs in a way they weren't intended to be used. Ritalin may seem harmless because it's prescribed even for little kids with ADHD. But when a person takes it either unnecessarily or in a way it wasn't intended to be used such as snorting or injection, Ritalin toxicity can be serious. And because there can be many variations of the same medication, the dose of medication and how long it stays in the body can vary. The person who doesn't have a prescription might not really know which one he or she has.

Probably the most common result of prescription drug abuse is addiction. People who abuse medications can become addicted just as easily as if they were taking street drugs. The reason many drugs have to be prescribed by a doctor is because some of them are quite addictive. That's one of the reasons most doctors won't usually renew a prescription unless they see the patient — they want to examine the patient to make sure he or she isn't getting addicted.

### How Do I Know if I'm Addicted?

Many different signs can point to drug addiction. The most obvious is feeling the need to have a particular drug or substance. Changes in mood, weight, or interests are other signs of drug addiction.

If you think you — or a friend — may be addicted to prescription drugs, talk to your doctor, school counselor, or nurse. They can help you get the help you need. It's especially important for someone who is going through withdrawal from a CNS depressant to speak with a doctor or seek medical treatment. Withdrawal can be dangerous when it's not monitored.

If someone has become addicted to prescription drugs, there are several kinds of treatment, depending on individual needs and the type of drug used. The two main categories of drug addiction treatment are **behavioral**

and **pharmacological**.

Behavioral treatments teach people how to function without drugs — handling cravings, avoiding drugs and situations that could lead to drug use, and preventing and handling relapses. Pharmacological treatments involve giving patients a special type of medication to help them overcome withdrawal symptoms and drug cravings.

### **Tips for Taking Prescription Medication**

What if a doctor prescribed a medication for you and you're worried about becoming addicted? If you're taking the medicine the way your doctor told you to, you can relax: Doctors know how much medication to prescribe so that it's just enough for you. In the correct amount, the drug will relieve your symptoms without making you addicted.

If a doctor prescribes a pain medication, stimulant, or CNS depressant, follow the directions exactly. Here are some other ways to protect yourself:

- Keep all doctor's appointments. Your doctor will want you to visit often so he or she can monitor how well the medication is working for you and adjust the dose or change the medication as needed. Some medications must be stopped or changed after a while so that the person doesn't become addicted.
- Make a note of the effects the drug has on your body and emotions, especially in the first few days as your body gets used to it. Tell your doctor about these.
- Keep any information your pharmacist gives you about any drugs or activities you should steer clear of while taking your prescription. Reread it often to remind yourself of what you should avoid. If the information is too long or complicated, ask a parent or your pharmacist to give you the highlights.
- Don't increase or decrease the dose of your medication without checking with your doctor's office first — no matter how you're feeling.

Finally, never use someone else's prescription. And don't allow a friend to use yours. Not only are you putting your friend at risk, but you could suffer, too: Pharmacists won't refill a prescription if a medication has been used up before it should be. And if you're found giving medication to someone else, it's considered a crime and you could find yourself in court.

Reviewed by: Steven Dowshen, MD

Date reviewed: April 2014

For informational purposes only. For specific medical advice,

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Note: All information on TeensHealth® is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult your doctor.

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# How to Beat Internet Addiction

Using the Internet for homework and for fun is common and normal. But, when your time online takes away from homework, time with friends and family or other things you enjoy, it's called Internet addiction. In this handout, you will learn tips to cut down on the time you spend online or on mobile apps.

## WHAT IS INTERNET ADDICTION?

**Internet addiction** is when you gradually (over time) lose control over how often you limit, avoid or control the amount of time you spend on the Internet. This can also include mobile apps.

For teens who have Internet addiction, going online releases **endorphins** (brain chemicals that trigger feelings of pleasure). This makes it very hard to control or limit how much time you spend online.

## WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF INTERNET ADDICTION?

**Internet addiction is similar to other types of addictions because it interrupts your real-life relationships with friends and family.** Time away from real-life relationships can cause you to be **socially awkward** because you haven't practiced your social skills with real people.

Internet addiction can also cause:

- Insomnia (not sleeping well)
- Not showering or keeping up with personal hygiene
- Not eating regularly
- Headaches and backaches
- Dry eyes from looking at a screen for a long time
- Carpal tunnel syndrome (numbness or tingling in your hand and arm)

### **A note for your parents...**

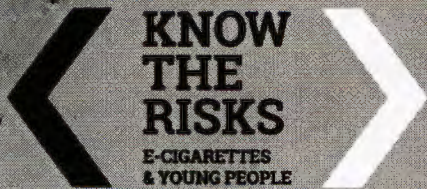
Doctors aren't sure what causes Internet addiction in teens. But, teens are more likely to have an Internet addiction if they are anxious, depressed, have low self-esteem, a poor self-image or have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

You can help your teen beat his/her Internet addiction by supervising how much time your teen spends online or on their smartphone or tablet. Use an app like Screen Time Parental Control® to track and set limits on your teen's time online.

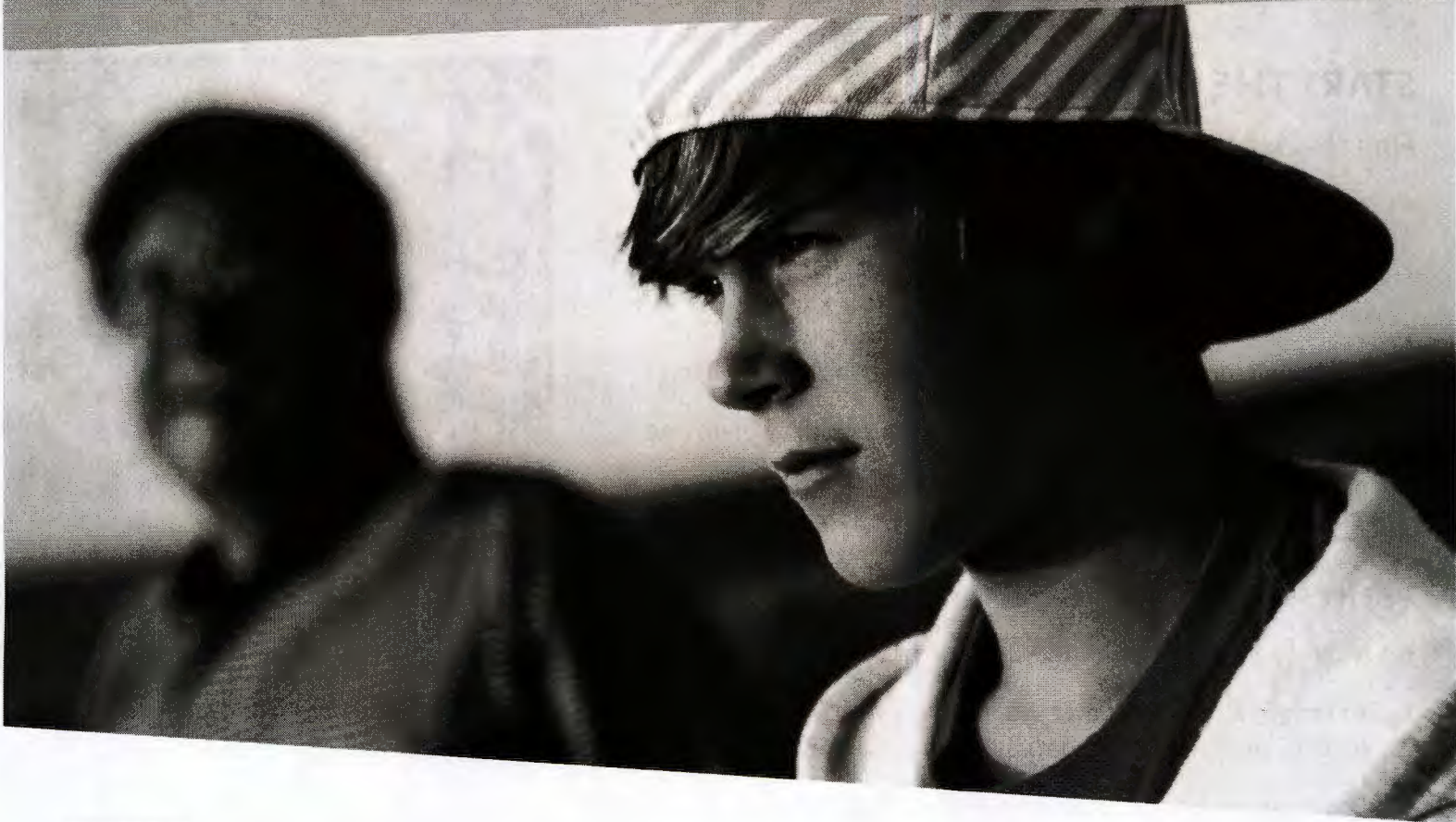
## HOW CAN I BEAT MY INTERNET ADDICTION?

- **If you think you have an Internet addiction, talk with your doctor or your parents.** They can help you come up with ways to beat your Internet addiction.
- **Pay attention to when you use the Internet or mobile apps.** If you're using the Internet or mobile apps for homework or work, that's okay. If your time online is taking away from friends, family and other things you enjoy, it's time to unplug.
- **Turn off or silence notifications for email, games and social media.** You will be less tempted to check if you can't hear the notifications.
- **Use a free app to track your Internet usage.** Some apps we suggest include:
  - **Break Free Cell Phone Addiction®.** This app lets you track and take control of how much you use the Internet or mobile apps. It also has timers that let you set how much time you spend online and tools to help you break free from Internet addiction. You can also share your accomplishments with others from the app.
  - **Quality Time – My Digital Diet®.** This app lets you track your Internet and app usage. It also lets you set your own time limits and breaks.
  - **Screen Time Companion®.** This app works with the Screen Time Parental Control® app. Your family decides how long you can spend on different apps and the Internet. You can also track your Internet and app usage.
- **Do something you enjoy that doesn't involve the Internet.** Play a sport or get outside. Read a book, draw or paint. Spend time with friends and family. Cook a healthy meal or take your dog for a walk.
- **Talk to others about Internet addiction.** Ask others about ways they have cut down on time spent online. This builds a relationship and trust between you and the other person.





# Talk with Your Teen About E-cigarettes: A Tip Sheet for Parents



## BEFORE THE TALK

*Know the facts.*

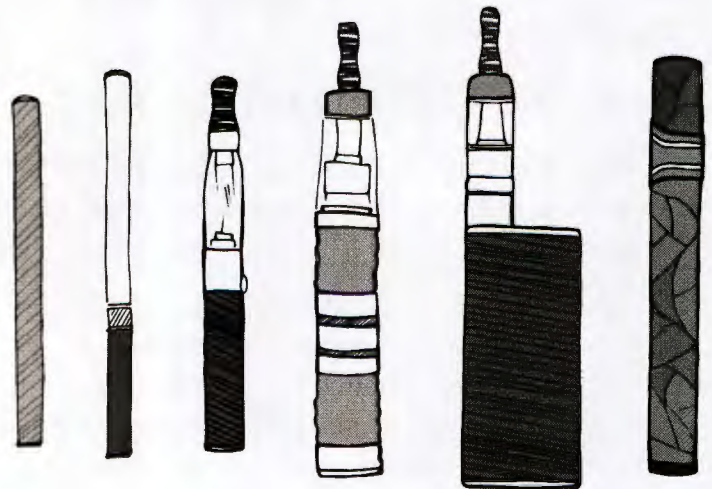
- Get credible information about e-cigarettes and young people at [E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov](http://E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov).

*Be patient and ready to listen.*

- Avoid criticism and encourage an open dialogue.
- Remember, your goal is to have a conversation, not to deliver a lecture.
- It's OK for your conversation to take place over time, in bits and pieces.

*Set a positive example by being tobacco-free.*

- If you use tobacco, it's never too late to quit. For free help, visit [smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov) or call **1-800-QUIT-NOW**.





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## START THE CONVERSATION

### *Find the right moment.*

- A more natural discussion will increase the likelihood that your teen will listen. Rather than saying "we need to talk," you might ask your teen what he or she thinks about a situation you witness together, such as:
  - » Seeing someone use an e-cigarette in person or in a video.
  - » Passing an e-cigarette shop when you are walking or driving.
  - » Seeing an e-cigarette advertisement in a store or magazine or on the internet.



### *Ask for support.*

- Not sure where to begin? Ask your health care provider to talk to your teen about the risks of e-cigarettes.
- You might also suggest that your teen talk with other trusted adults, such as relatives, teachers, faith leaders, coaches, or counselors whom you know are aware of the risks of e-cigarettes.
- These supportive adults can help reinforce your message as a parent.

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## ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS

Here are some questions and comments you might get from your teen about e-cigarettes and some ideas about how you can answer them.

### *Why don't you want me to use e-cigarettes?*

- Science shows that e-cigarettes contain ingredients that are addictive and could harm different parts of your body.
- Right now, your brain is still developing, which means you are more vulnerable to addiction. Many e-cigarettes contain nicotine, and using nicotine can change your brain to make you crave more nicotine. It can also affect your memory and concentration. I don't want that for you!
- E-cigarettes contain chemicals that are harmful. When people use e-cigarettes, they breathe in tiny particles that can harm their lungs.

- The cloud that people exhale from e-cigarettes can expose you to chemicals that are not safe to breathe.

### *What's the big deal about nicotine?*

- Your brain is still developing until about age 25. The Surgeon General reported that nicotine is addictive and can harm your brain development.
- Using nicotine at your age may make it harder for you to concentrate, learn, or control your impulses.
- Nicotine can even train your brain to be more easily addicted to other drugs like meth and cocaine.



- I don't say this to scare you, but I want you to have the facts because nothing is more important to me than your health and safety.

### *Aren't e-cigarettes safer than conventional cigarettes?*

- Because your brain is still developing, scientific studies show that it isn't safe for you to use any tobacco product that contains nicotine, including e-cigarettes.
- Whether you get nicotine from an e-cigarette or a cigarette, it's still risky.
- Some e-cigarette batteries have even exploded and hurt people.

### *I thought e-cigarettes didn't have nicotine—just water and flavoring?*

- I used to think that too. But many e-cigarettes have nicotine. There are also other chemicals in them that can be harmful.
- Let's look at the Surgeon General's website on e-cigarettes ([E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov](http://E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov)) together so you can see for yourself.

### *I (or my friends) have tried e-cigarettes and it was no big deal.*

- I appreciate your honesty. In the future, I hope you (or your friends) will stay away from e-cigarettes and other tobacco products, including cigarettes. Science shows that e-cigarettes contain ingredients that are addictive and could harm different parts of your body.
- Next time we go to the doctor, let's ask about the risks of nicotine, e-cigarettes, and other tobacco products.

### *You used tobacco, so why shouldn't I?*

- If I could live my life over again, I never would have started smoking. I learned that people who smoke cigarettes are much more likely to develop, and die from, certain diseases than people who don't smoke. This was really scary, so I quit smoking.
- Quitting was really hard, and I don't want you to go through that. The best thing is to not start at all.





## KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Many parents find that texting is a great way to reach their teens. Here are some suggestions for text messages that might catch your teen's attention. And, you can easily share pages of the website ([E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov](http://E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov)) with your teen.



Share this page

Look for this symbol, click it, type in the message you want or use the message provided, and share with your teen via Facebook, Twitter, or email.

### *Connect and encourage.*

- You always liked science. Check out the science about e-cigarettes and young people: **[E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov](http://E-cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov)**
- Getting off nicotine is hard but I'm so happy I quit. Don't make that mistake and get addicted. Smoking and tobacco use, including using e-cigarettes, are unsafe for young people.

### *Remind and repeat.*

- Most teenagers don't use e-cigarettes. E-cigarettes with nicotine can mess with your brain, and your brain is still developing until you are at least 25.
- You might be tempted by e-cigarette flavors, but inhaling certain flavorings that have been found in some e-cigarettes can be harmful.

### *Share facts and resources.*

- Just learned that many e-cigarettes have nicotine in them. That's the drug that makes cigarettes so addictive. Nicotine can also mess with your brain development.
- Just saw a report from the Surgeon General that e-cigarettes can mess with how your brain develops and might even affect your mood and focus. Please don't use any products that contain nicotine.
- Hope none of your friends use e-cigarettes around you. Even breathing the cloud they exhale can expose you to nicotine and chemicals that can be dangerous to your health.



Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention  
Office on Smoking  
and Health

