



Talk

EARLY

Talk OFTEN

Get others INVOLVED

## Learn to answer the tough questions.

As your child becomes more and more curious about alcohol, he or she may turn to you for answers and advice. Use this opportunity to start an open, honest conversation about drinking. Since some questions can be difficult to answer, it's important to be prepared.

### **I got invited to a party... can I go?**

Ask your child if an adult will be present at the party, or if he or she thinks children will be drinking. Remind your child that even just being at a party where underage people are drinking can get them in trouble. Use this time to establish or reinforce your rules about alcohol, and what behavior you expect.

### **Did you drink when you were a child?**

If you drank as a teenager, experts recommend that you give an honest answer.<sup>1</sup> Explain why you were tempted to try alcohol and why underage drinking is dangerous. You could even give your child an example of an embarrassing or painful moment that occurred because of your drinking.

### **Why do you drink?**

Explain to your child your reasons for drinking – whether it's to enhance a meal, share good times with friends, or celebrate a special occasion. Point out that if you choose to drink, it's always in moderation. Tell your child that some people shouldn't drink at all, including children who are underage.

### **What if my friends ask me to drink?**

Helping your child say “no” to peer pressure is one of the most important things you can do to keep him or her alcohol-free. Work with your child to think of a way for them to handle this situation, whether it's simply saying “No” or suggesting an alternative activity for them to do.

### **You drink alcohol, so why can't I?**

Remind your child that underage drinking is against the law – for good reason. Point out that adults' bodies are full-grown, so they can handle drinking; but children's bodies are still growing, so alcohol can have a greater impact on their judgment and health.<sup>2</sup>

### **Why is alcohol bad for me?**

Don't try to scare your child about drinking or tell him or her, “You can't handle it.” For example you should tell him or her, “Alcohol can be bad for your growing brain, interferes with your judgment, and can make you sick.” Once children hear the facts and your opinions about them, it's easier for you to make rules and enforce them.

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>SAMHSA, “Start Talking Before They Start Drinking,” 2009, Page 26.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking,” 2007, Page 5.