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TALKING ABOUT DRUGS

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TALKING WITH TEENAGERS ABOUT DRUGS

Some parents and guardians may find it difficult to talk with their teenager about drugs. Between illegal drugs and prescription medications, it may be hard to know where to begin. But drugs can be dangerous, and some teenagers are not aware of the risks.

TALKING WITH YOUR TEENAGER

As a parent or guardian, you might need to talk with your teenager about drugs because:

- > Your teenager will hear information about drugs from their friends, the media, even other adults and some of this information will be wrong.
- > Your teenager is not using drugs, but you want to educate them about the risks in case they are ever tempted to try them.
- > Your teenager may not use drugs, but they (or you) are concerned that someone they know might be.
- > You realize (or suspect) that your teenager is using drugs, and you want to help them stop.
- > Your teenager may be asking questions about drugs. Give them reasons to say no.

It is important that parents talk about drugs regularly before there is an urgent need to do so. Many short conversations are better than a few long lectures, and teenagers are more likely to pay attention during shorter chats.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

There is no script for talking with your teenager about drugs. But here are a few tips to keep in mind.

- > Offer them control of the situation. Let them pick the time and place.
- > Look for opportunities to talk about drug use with your teenager, like when you discuss school or current events.
- > Plan the main points you want to discuss, rather than speaking on impulse. Avoid saying everything you think all at once. Instead, target your main points about drugs.
- > Listen to them and respect their opinion. If they see you as a good listener, they may be more inclined to trust your input. Give them room to participate and ask questions.
- > Focus on facts rather than emotions. If your teenager is using drugs, you may feel anger, sadness, fear or confusion. Those are natural reactions. But talking about the issue is more productive than talking about your feelings.
- > Avoid being judgmental.





- > Respect their independence. Tell them you are trying to help them make good decisions, by giving them information they may not know.
- > Be clear about why you are worried. Whatever your teenager may think, communicate that your main concern is for their well-being.

You are your teenager's most important role model and their best defense against drug use. Start early and answer the questions about drugs before they are asked.

TALKING ABOUT MARIJUANA

Teenagers react more positively to facts than to emotional arguments. Here are a few facts about marijuana you can share with them.

- > Today's marijuana is much stronger than marijuana from many years ago. Studies show that the average level of THC, the principal "mind-altering" component of marijuana, has increased by 300% to 400% over the last few decades.
- > Marijuana contains hundreds of substances, some of which are psychoactive and can affect the proper functioning of the brain and body.
- > Regular long-term marijuana use can harm concentration, cause loss of memory, harm the ability to think and make decisions, and decrease IQ. Some of these effects may persist after stopping marijuana use.
- > Marijuana smoke contains many of the same cancer-causing chemicals as tobacco smoke.
- > It is estimated that 1 in 9 marijuana users will develop an addiction to marijuana.

TALKING ABOUT PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Teenagers react more positively to facts than to emotional arguments. Here are a few facts about prescription drug abuse you can share with them.

- > Some prescription drugs (opioid pain relievers, stimulants, and benzodiazepines) have psychoactive (mind-altering) properties, and for this reason they are sometimes used to get high.
- > Psychoactive pharmaceuticals are the third most commonly-abused substances, after alcohol and marijuana, among Canadian youth.
- > Prescription opioids can be just as dangerous as illegal opioid drugs such as heroin.
- > Taking prescription drugs without a doctor's approval is dangerous, and can even be fatal.
- > Prescription drugs, when used improperly or abused, are not safer than illegal drugs.
- > There are many dangerous and unpredictable effects associated with abusing prescription drugs including addiction, overdose and death.



RISKS OF ABUSING DRUGS

People who abuse drugs risk harming their physical and mental health, relationships with others, performance at school or work, and more.

Different kinds of drugs have different risks, but many risks are common to all.

SHORT-TERM EFFECTS OF DRUGS

Drugs do not have the same effects on everyone. People could have a bad reaction for a number of reasons.

- > Instead of making a person feel calm and relaxed, the drug might make them feel anxious, depressed, nauseated or paranoid.
- > The drug could interact badly with something else a person may take, such as:
 - » over-the-counter medication,
 - » prescription medication,
 - » alcohol, or
 - » other illegal drugs.
- > A person might overdose.

Even if none of these things happen, people can never know if their next experience will be harmful.

THE DRUG IS NOT WHAT IT SEEMS

Even when people know the person who sold or gave them the drug, they cannot be sure what is in it. Perhaps it was the drug they wanted and paid for. Or perhaps it was something else entirely.

- > The marijuana people smoke may be much stronger than they thought. It may also be contaminated with pesticides, or mould.
- > Sellers may mix the real drug with things like cornstarch, soaps, or other drugs such as methamphetamine. For example, many “ecstasy” pills sold may contain little or no MDMA.
- > Sometimes drugs are mixed with other potent drugs (for example, heroin mixed with fentanyl), a lethal combination that can result in death.



DRUGS IN AN UNFAMILIAR SETTING

When people use a drug, especially for the first time, they may not know what to do if something goes wrong. They might find themselves in a situation they cannot control and be unable to:

- > find someone to help them,
- > get home, or
- > reach medical help if they need it.

THINKING YOU CAN MANAGE DRUG ABUSE

Many people, when they start to take drugs, believe they can control the effects. They think they can keep their use at a safe level, so the drug does not affect their life. But the harmful effects of regular drug use can often build up slowly over time. Sometimes it may take months or years for some of the harmful effects to appear.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF DRUGS

Over time, the negative effects of drugs may come to outweigh any perceived positive effects. People under the influence of drugs usually make poor decisions and engage in risky behaviour; so many parts of their lives might suffer.

- > **School**—using drugs can affect people’s ability to study, to concentrate in class, and to keep up with assignments.
- > **Work**—if people cannot focus because of their drug use, they might lose their job. Worse, they could endanger or hurt themselves or others at work.

- > **Relationships**—drugs can make people emotional and unreasonable, particularly if others criticize their drug use.
- > **Money**—using drugs can be expensive. People might struggle to pay bills or buy the things they need.
- > **Mood**—people may feel good while they take drugs, but they feel worse when the effects wear off.
- > **Sex**—using drugs might make people forget to practice safe sex. The result of unprotected sex could be a sexually transmitted infection or an unwanted pregnancy.
- > **Legal Problems**—illegal sale or possession of drugs can dramatically affect a young person’s future. If charged and convicted, they will have a criminal record that may present problems in the future with potential employers or when travelling out of the country.

Drugs might also influence people’s lives in other ways they might not expect. The risks include harm to their physical health.

- > Heavy use of some drugs not only affects the brain, it can also damage major organs such as the liver, kidneys, and lungs.
- > If people inject drugs they may be at serious risk of acquiring a blood-borne virus. Sharing needles or having unprotected sexual activity can spread diseases like hepatitis C and even HIV.
- > Driving impaired by a drug puts people at higher risk of having an accident and getting hurt or hurting someone else.



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- > There are many dangerous and unpredictable effects associated with abusing drugs, including addiction, overdose and death.

Mental health may also be affected if people use drugs. Some drugs can trigger psychosis, a mental disorder where people lose touch with reality. People who have a personal or family history of psychosis are especially at risk.

When people are addicted to a drug they:

- > feel they cannot function without it,
- > spend most of their time finding and using the drug,
- > need more and more of the drug to get the same effect, and
- > use the drug (or other drugs) to cope with, or to avoid, withdrawal effects.

REASONS TO SAY NO TO DRUGS

People have many reasons for using drugs, and your teenager may be considering some of them. They also may have misconceptions about how many people are using drugs. Talking to them about why they can choose to say no is one of the best ways you can help them.

THE TRUTH ABOUT DRUG USE

Your teenager might think that everybody but them is experimenting with drugs. This may seem true because they see drug use:

- > on television, in movies and on social media,
- > when hanging out with friends, or
- > at parties and concerts.

REASONS PEOPLE MAY USE DRUGS

There are plenty of reasons why some people use drugs. Here are some of the common ones and some of the reasons why your teenager might choose a drug-free life.

EVERYBODY ELSE IS DOING IT. I WANT TO FIT IN.

- > They may consider doing drugs because they think it will help them fit in.
- > Instead of helping you fit in, drugs could actually destroy your friendships.
- > Drugs can waste your time and money, leaving little of either to spend with your friends.
- > You do not have to do all the same things your friends do, just to keep your friendships.

MY LIFE IS STRESSFUL. DRUGS HELP ME COPE.

- > Drugs are not the way to deal with stress. They change the way your brain works. This can lead to depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses.
- > If you already have a mental health issue, drugs can worsen your condition.
- > The best way to deal with stress is to confront it without using drugs. Try to identify what is causing your stress, and find a healthier way to handle it. Some good options are:
 - » hanging out with your friends who do not use drugs
 - » doing something you enjoy doing like exercise or sports, art, music, meditation or yoga
 - » watching television, surfing the web, or reading a book
- > Sometimes seeking support and the help of others can help with the stress. Talk to someone you can trust, such as:
 - » a therapist (mental health professional),
 - » a school guidance counsellor, a teacher or coach,
 - » your best friend,
 - » your parents, or
 - » a telephone helpline.





I WAS CURIOUS.

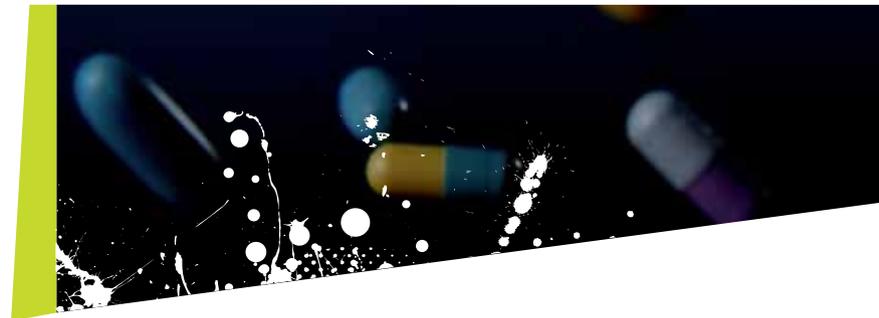
- > It is natural to be curious. But drugs are not worth the risk.
- > Drugs can affect your judgment and your decision-making skills, which could lead you to join in dangerous activities. For example, you might drive while under the influence or get in a car with someone driving under the influence.
- > You do not know how you or somebody else will react to a drug. You might suffer from an overdose of the drug and even possibly die.

I SAW IT ON TELEVISION OR IN A MOVIE.

- > What people think is popular can be strongly influenced by television shows and movies. Their images of drug use are unrealistic.
- > These media images rarely show the true consequences of drug use. In real life, using drugs often leads to:
 - » poor performance at school and at work,
 - » changes in your personality,
 - » conflicts with family and friends,
 - » problems with your health, and
 - » possible injury and/or death.
- > You may think that avoiding drugs will make you unpopular. But it is healthier for you to show people who you are by your activities and your friends.

I AM NOT ADDICTED. I CAN STOP AT ANY TIME.

- > Even the people who are now addicted to drugs once believed they could stop using any time.
- > People become addicted slowly over time. Once addicted, it can be very difficult to stop. Stopping can trigger withdrawal symptoms, which may be very unpleasant. People often begin to use drugs again in order to avoid these unpleasant symptoms.
- > If you become addicted, realizing this fact is the first step to recovery. Ask your health care provider for help. You may need the support of friends or family to cope during this difficult time.



DRIVING IMPAIRED BY A DRUG

People impaired by a drug are not safe drivers because they are not able to concentrate fully and react quickly. This not only risks the driver's safety, but also the safety of their passengers and others on the road.

Driving impaired by a drug is illegal. Being a passenger with someone who is driving impaired by a drug is also very dangerous.

RISKS WHILE DRIVING IMPAIRED BY A DRUG

When you drive a vehicle, your brain needs to be alert and focused. Even small amounts of a drug can affect your ability to drive safely. Different drugs act on your brain in different ways, but almost all affect your:

- > motor skills,
- > balance and coordination,
- > attention,
- > judgment,
- > reaction time, and
- > decision-making skills.

Serious accidents can easily happen when you drive while impaired by a drug. Many drivers who have collisions may have both drugs and alcohol in their system. Police can test impaired drivers for alcohol using breathalyzer tests. While no roadside test for drugs is currently available, police across Canada trained as drug recognition experts have the tools and ability to determine if a person is impaired by drugs and/or alcohol.

DRUGS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO COLLISIONS

Studies of vehicle accidents around the world show that the drugs most commonly implicated in accidents (after alcohol) include:

- > marijuana,
- > opioids,
- > amphetamines,
- > benzodiazepines, and
- > cocaine.

Performance becomes even worse if drivers use both marijuana and alcohol.

Prescription drugs, when used properly or when abused, can also impair driving. Legal drugs, such as opioid pain relievers and benzodiazepines (prescribed for anxiety or sleep disorders) can affect a person's ability to safely control a moving vehicle. People who are prescribed these medications are warned by their pharmacist against operating any machinery, including vehicles, for a certain time after taking them. People who abuse these medications to get high may not even be aware of this danger.





STATISTICS FOR DRIVING IMPAIRED BY A DRUG

According to the 2012–2013 Canadian Youth Smoking Survey (YSS):

- > One in five (20%) students in grades 7 to 12 reported having ridden in a car driven by someone (including themselves) who was high or had been using alcohol or drugs.

According to the 2012 Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey (CADUMS):

- > Almost one in six (15.2%) people between the ages of 15 and 24 reported being a passenger in a motor vehicle driven by someone who had used marijuana in the previous 2 hours.

TEENS, DRUGS AND DRIVING

Many car crashes involving teenagers are caused by inexperience and poor judgment. When these factors are combined with alcohol, marijuana or other drugs, the results can be tragic.

Parents play a vital role in teaching young people to drive responsibly. That means teaching them not to drive impaired by alcohol or drugs. There is no safe limit for young drivers, since even one drink or a small amount of a drug can affect them. Parents should also offer the following guidance.

- > Discuss how drugs and alcohol can impair driving ability, affect perceptions, and slow reaction times.
- > Remind teens that it is always illegal and dangerous to drive impaired by alcohol or drugs.
- > Discuss the dangers of getting into a car with a driver who has been drinking or using drugs.
- > Make it clear that using alcohol, marijuana or other drugs when driving is dangerous.
- > Model safe driving behaviour by never driving any vehicle impaired.

GET HELP

Are you struggling with drug use? Is someone you care about having a problem?

Help is available, whether you need it for yourself, a friend, or a family member.

Many resources are available to answer your questions, offer advice or give hands-on help. If you need assistance, contact any of these organizations or groups.

NATIONAL HELP RESOURCES

Kids Help Phone

- > Canada's only counselling and information service for children and youth provides immediate, anonymous and confidential support.
- > The toll-free, bilingual service operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- > Visit the website, or call 1-800-668-6868
- > www.kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/Home.aspx

Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse

- > Provides leadership in reducing the harm of alcohol and other drugs on society.
- > www.ccsa.ca/Eng/Pages/default.aspx

Partnership for a drug-free Canada

- > Provides parents with the tools they need to talk to their kids.
- > www.canadadrugfree.org

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

- > Canada's largest hospital devoted to mental health and addiction.
- > www.camh.ca/en/hospital/Pages/home.aspx

Centre for Youth Crime Prevention

- > Drug awareness program organized by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Centre for Youth Crime Prevention.
- > www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cycp-cpcj/index-eng.htm

Canadian Assembly of Narcotics Anonymous

- > Provides information and services to recovering drug addicts.
- > www.canaacna.org

eMentalHealth.ca

- > Mental health services, help and support in your community.
- > www.eMentalHealth.ca





HELP RESOURCES IN YOUR PROVINCE OR TERRITORY

ALBERTA

Alberta Health Services Addiction Helpline

- > A 24-hour confidential service available to all Albertans.
- > Toll-free: 1-866-332-2322

Alberta Health Services—Addiction and Substance Abuse

- > A list of programs, services and treatment facilities available in Alberta.
- > www.albertahealthservices.ca/addiction.asp

Alcohol and Drug Use in Young People

- > Prevention strategies for parents and caregivers.
- > www.myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwld=tp17749

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Service

- > This service is available to people across B.C. needing help with any kind of substance abuse issues 24 hours a day. It provides information and referral to education, prevention and treatment services and regulatory agencies.
- > Toll-Free: 1-800-663-1441
- > Lower Mainland: 604-660-9382

HealthLink BC

- > HealthLink BC helps you learn about health topics, check your symptoms and find the health services and resources that you need for healthy living. Call 8-1-1 to consult with a nurse, pharmacist or dietitian or visit HealthLinkBC.ca for easy access to help you find the health services you need, closest to where you live. Translation services are available in over 130 languages on request.
- > Anywhere in B.C.: 8-1-1
- > TTY (Deaf and hearing-impaired): 7-1-1

BC Crisis Line

- > Toll-Free: 310-6789 (no area code needed)
- > www.crisislines.bc.ca



Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre

- > A provincial resource centre that provides mental health and substance use information, resources, and peer support to children, youth and their families from across B.C.
- > Toll-Free: 1-800-665-1822
- > Lower Mainland: 604-875-2084
- > www.keltymentalhealth.ca/substance-use

BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services

- > Tel: 604-875-2345, or toll-free (in B.C. only) 1-888-300-3088
- > www.bcmhsus.ca

Mind Check

- > Designed to help youth and young adults in British Columbia check out how they're feeling and quickly connect to mental health resources and support. Support includes education, self-care tools, website links, and assistance in connecting to local professional resources.
- > www.mindcheck.ca

Here to Help

- > Provides access to information on mental health, mental disorders and substance use problems and disorders.
- > www.heretohelp.bc.ca

MANITOBA

Government of Manitoba, Healthy Living and Seniors, Addictions

- > www.gov.mb.ca/healthyliving/addictions/index.html

Provincial Adult Addictions Information

- > Toll-Free Line: 1-855-662-6605

Youth Addictions Centralized Intake Service

- > Toll-Free Line: 1-877-710-3999

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba

- > www.afm.mb.ca

Resource Assistance For Youth (RaY)

- > 1-204-783-5617
- > www.rayinc.ca

Mobile Crisis Services

- > Winnipeg RHA—Adult Mobile Crisis Service: 204-940-1781
- > Youth Mobile Crisis Team: 204-949-4777
- > Interlake-Eastern RHA—Mobile Crisis Services: 204-482-5376 or toll free 1-877-499-8770
- > Prairie Mountain Health—Mobile Crisis Unit: 204-725-4411
- > Southern Health—East of Red River Mental Health Access Crisis Response Services/Warm Call line: 204-326-9276 or 1-888-617-7715
- > Southern Health—West of Red River Mental Health Access Crisis Response: 1-866-588-1697
- > www.gov.mb.ca/healthyliving/mh/crisis.html

Crisis Line

- > 24/7 Crisis Line: 204-786-8686



NEW BRUNSWICK

Tele-care

- > Call from anywhere in New Brunswick (available 24 hours/day).
- > Tel: 8-1-1

Addiction Treatment Services

- > A branch of New Brunswick's Department of Health.
- > www.gnb.ca/0378/addiction-e.asp
- > www.gnb.ca/0378/centers-e.asp

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Newfoundland and Labrador Healthline

- > Call toll-free 24-hours a day.
- > Toll-free: 1-888-709-2929
- > TTY: 1-888-709-3555
- > www.yourhealthline.ca

Provincial Mental Health Crisis Line

- > Toll-free: 1-888-737-4668

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Department of Health and Community Services Mental Health and Addictions

- > Call: 1-709-729-3658
- > www.gov.nl.ca/health/mentalhealth/index.html
- > www.getuponit.ca
- > www.understandnow.ca

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Northwest Territories Helpline

- > Call toll-free from anywhere in the Northwest Territories
- > Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0844

Government of the Northwest Territories, Department of Health and Social Services, Addictions: where to get help

- > www.hss.gov.nt.ca/social-services/mental-health-and-addictions/addictions-where-get-help

NOVA SCOTIA

Government of Nova Scotia

- > Department of Health and Wellness Addiction Services
- > www.novascotia.ca/dhw/addictions/addiction-services-offices.asp

Addiction Services Provincial Line

- > Tel: 1-866-340-6700

NUNAVUT

Nunavut Kamatsiaqtut Help Line

- > Provides anonymous and confidential telephone counselling for northerners in crisis.
- > Tel: 867-979-3333
- > Toll-Free: 1-800-265-3333
- > www.nunavuthelpline.ca/index.html

Government of Nunavut, Department of Health

- > www.gov.nu.ca/health

ONTARIO

Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Mental Health and Addictions

- > www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/mentalhealth

ConnexOntario, Drug and Alcohol Helpline

- > Provides free, confidential and anonymous information services about drug and alcohol addiction services in Ontario, by phone, email or web chat, 24/7/365.
- > Toll-Free: 1-800-565-8603
- > www.drugandalcoholhelpline.ca

Parent Action on Drugs

- > Develops programs and resources for parents, youth, educators, health promoters and communities related to substance abuse.
- > www.parentactionondrugs.org

Good2Talk

- > Is a free, confidential and anonymous helpline (24/7/365) for post-secondary students (17-25) in Ontario that provides professional counselling and information and referrals on mental health, addictions and well-being.
- > Toll-Free: 1-866-925-5454
- > www.good2talk.ca

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Prince Edward Island Addiction Services

- > Toll-Free from anywhere in Prince Edward Island: 1-888-299-8399

Health PEI

- > www.healthpei.ca

QUEBEC

Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux

- > Government of Quebec website
- > www.dependances.gouv.qc.ca

Drugs: Help and Referrals

- > Call toll-free from anywhere in Quebec or locally in Montreal.
- > Toll-Free: 1-800-265-2626
- > Montreal: 514-527-2626
- > www.drogue-aidereference.qc.ca

Tel-jeunes

- > Helpline for youth. Call 24 hours/day, 7 days/week toll-free anywhere in Quebec.
- > Toll-Free: 1-800-263-2266
- > Tel: 514-600-1002 (text messaging, from 8am to 10pm)
- > www.teljeunes.com

LigneParents

- > Helpline for parents. Call 24 hours/day, 7 days/week toll-free anywhere in Quebec.
- > Toll-Free: 1-800-361-5085
- > www.ligneparents.com





SASKATCHEWAN

Government of Saskatchewan HealthLine

- > Online and telephone services for adults, youth and health providers.
- > Tel: 8-1-1
- > www.health.gov.sk.ca/healthline-online

Government of Saskatchewan, Healthy Living, Alcohol, Drugs and your Health

- > Information about the risks and effects of drug and alcohol abuse.
- > www.health.gov.sk.ca/alcohol-and-drugs

Government of Saskatchewan, Mental Health and Addictions, Alcohol and Drug Services

- > Directory of Alcohol and Drug Treatment Services
- > www.health.gov.sk.ca/treatment-services-directory

YUKON

Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Service

- > A 24-hour toll-free helpline from anywhere in Yukon.
- > Toll-Free: 1-855-667-5777
- > www.hss.govyk.ca/adirs_helpline.php

Government of Yukon, Alcohol and Drug Services

- > www.hss.govyk.ca/ads.php



