

Skills and tips to prevent underage drinking.

Below, you'll find proven advice on how parents can help their children remain alcohol-free, divided into four topics:

1. **The Power of Parents:** Teenagers still listen to their parents more than anybody else.
2. **Bonding:** Children who feel close to their parents are less likely to drink.
3. **Boundaries:** Parents need to set clear rules and expectations about no underage drinking.
4. **Monitoring:** Knowing where your children are, who they're with, and what they are doing helps prevent underage drinking.

The Power of Parents

Parents are the most powerful influence on their children's behavior.

Believe it or not, teens still listen to their parents. In fact, kids usually listen to their parents more than anybody else, including their friends. In a recent survey on underage drinking, teens reported that parental disapproval is the #1 reason they choose not to drink.

"What parents may not realize is that children say parental disapproval of underage drinking is the key reason they have chosen not to drink."

Charles Curie, former Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) administrator, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. ¹

Parenting tops peer pressure.

Around puberty, most children naturally begin to push away from their parents. It's a normal part of development. However, as a result, many parents feel that they've suddenly lost the ability to influence their teenagers. It's not true. While parents may feel that their teens are tuning them out and no longer listening to their advice, their teenage children are reporting just the opposite. So as a parent, stay involved. You do make a difference!

Kids need help to stay alcohol-free.

Education alone will not keep children from using alcohol when there are constant pressures and opportunities to drink. The areas of the brain that encourage impulsivity and risk-taking develop early in teens, while the areas that improve self-control don't develop until the very late teens or early 20s. ² Parents must stay actively involved to help their children remain alcohol-free.

And staying involved isn't easy. Parents are busier than ever before, with work, managing a home, keeping in touch with family and friends, and helping in the community. Yet making the extra effort to stay closely involved in bonding, setting boundaries, and monitoring will make a powerful difference in keeping your child alcohol free. It is worth the extra effort to have your child grow up addiction free, with a healthy, fully functioning brain. Putting in a little extra effort now will save a lot of time, grief, and effort later.

Parents often underestimate the problem.

In Utah, drinking now begins as early as elementary school, and parents are often unaware of their child's use of alcohol. ³ In fact, in a national survey, 31 percent of kids who said they had been drunk in the past year had parents who believed their children were nondrinkers. ⁴

What can parents do?

First, they can learn and explain how alcohol can damage their child's brain and increase the risk of addiction. ([Click here](#) for "Harms".) ([Click here](#) to download a complete lesson on how alcohol can harm brain development.) Then, they can apply the following three research-proven skills that prevent underage drinking: 1 - [Bonding](#) 2- [Boundaries](#) 3- [Monitoring](#)