



Recovery Notes

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Scientific Recovery

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For Problems with Alcohol

OUTPATIENT TREATMENT FOR HIGH-PROFILE WOMEN

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What parents can do to prevent adolescent drinking

In the United States in 2011, there were an estimated 25.1 million adolescents aged 12 to 17. In the past year, more than 25% of adolescents drank alcohol. These high rates of adolescent drinking and the damage that can ensue when children drink, place great significance on the role of the family in determining whether or not a child will engage in alcohol use. It is important for parents to understand what they can do to help prevent their children from using alcohol. Research suggests the following guidelines for parents.

MODEL RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIORS

Children form their beliefs about alcohol use more on the basis of their parents' actions than on the basis of their parents' words. Children will imitate parents' healthy and unhealthy behaviors. For example, by their

own behavior, parents can avoid teaching their children that alcohol use is the way to relax or that excessive drinking can be fun. When parents never mix drinking and driving, children can learn some of the behavioral hazards of alcohol consumption and strive to avoid them.

SET RULES ABOUT ALCOHOL AND EXPECT CHILDREN TO COMPLY WITH THEM

Consistent messages of parental disapproval of substance use are strongly linked to lower rates of children's substance use. Over 40% of teens who say their parents would not particularly disapprove of their having one or two alcoholic drinks nearly every day currently use alcohol. Only 15% of teens who say their parents would strongly disapprove are drinking alcohol. When asked about the risks they associate with alcohol use, teenagers consistently rank disappointing their parents as a major risk.

Too often, parents not only fail to set clear rules and expectations, but actually are quite permissive about their children's alcohol use. Studies show that only 23% of parents explicitly prohibit their children from using alcohol before they reach 21. In contrast, 25% of teens between 15 and 17 have attended a party at which parents purchased alcohol for them or served alcohol to them.

Some parents look the other way in response to their children's use of alcohol. Children's own homes and family members are common sources of alcohol, especially for younger teens who drink alcohol secretly.

MONITOR CHILDREN'S FRIENDS AND ACTIVITIES

There is strong evidence that teens who are closely supervised and monitored by their parents are less likely to use alcohol than less

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supervised teens. Effective monitoring activities include getting to know children's friends and discussing strategies to avoid or handle situations in which peers are drinking. When parents are very familiar with their children's friends, pastimes and daily whereabouts, they are more likely to be able to prevent risky situations and to intervene if necessary.

Children who are left alone to take care of themselves for extended periods of time are at great risk for heavy drinking. "Latchkey children," who take care of themselves after school hours are almost four times more likely to have gotten drunk in the past month than non-latchkey children.

Although parental supervision and monitoring are important, parents who use excessive methods of control can make their children more vulnerable to alcohol use. Teens whose parents are coercive – characterized by hitting, threatening and yelling – are more likely than teens without coercive parents to engage in alcohol use. Coercion, extreme strictness and autocratic parenting put children at equal or greater risk for alcohol use, as do overly lenient parenting behaviors.

DEVELOP POSITIVE AND SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN

Studies show that children who grow up in caring and supportive family environments, in which parents have high expectations of their children and encourage their children's participation in family routines and rituals, are less likely to abuse alcohol. When children experience parental praise, affection, acceptance, and family bonding they are at a lower risk of alcohol use. Teens who value positive relationships with their parents and who are satisfied with those relationships report significantly less alcohol use than teens who do not.

Teens who have open lines of communication with their parents have lower levels of alcohol use. Parents can effectively discourage alcohol use by actively talking about it and cautioning children about the risks of drinking in adolescence. Recent studies show that teens want to be able to talk with their parents about drinking and related problems.

MAINTAIN FAMILY RITUALS

Research consistently shows that those teens who frequently eat dinner with their families are at half the risk of alcohol use as teens who

have family dinners infrequently. Teens who frequently have dinner with their families are less likely to have sexually active friends and to spend a lot of time with a boyfriend or girlfriend – both risk factors for alcohol use.

INVOLVE OTHERS IN CHILDREN'S LIVES

Parents are not the only adult role models that can positively influence children. Children are at lower risk for alcohol use when they can look to other family members, friends, and neighbors as positive role models who offer support and caring. Neighborhoods and communities that provide positive role models, hold high expectations for achievement and encourage youth participation in events protect children from engaging in alcohol use.

INCORPORATE RELIGION OR SPIRITUALITY INTO FAMILY LIFE

Families who practice a religion are less likely to have children who use alcohol. Both religion and spirituality are linked to better health and to increased chances of alcohol abuse recovery. Parental attendance at religious services and the belief that religion is important are linked to lower rates of alcohol abuse in adults, which translates to lower rates of alcohol use in children. Teens who never attend religious services are more than twice as likely to drink and more than three times more likely to binge drink.

Unfortunately, too many parents view teen alcohol use as something they are powerless to stop. The research shows that, in fact, parents play a powerful role in the prevention of this dangerous behavior.

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10 Steps Parents Can Take to Prevent Teen Alcohol Abuse

- 1 Set a good example
- 2 Know your child's whereabouts, activities and friends
- 3 Eat dinner together regularly
- 4 Set fair rules and hold your children to them
- 5 Be caring and supportive of your child
- 6 Maintain open lines of communication
- 7 Surround your child with positive role models
- 8 Incorporate religion or spirituality into family life
- 9 Learn the signs and symptoms of alcohol abuse
- 10 If problems occur, get help promptly

Scientific Recovery

Scientific Recovery is an evidence-based treatment program for women seeking state-of-the-art, individual therapy for problem drinking. Our focus is on professional women who have recognized that alcohol is a problem they no longer want in their lives. Our goal is to assist women not only to eliminate their alcohol dependence, but also to be happy that they did.



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