



never underestimate the power of caring

Alcohol Use

Every time you mix a cocktail, have a soft drink instead of a beer, or serve wine at a party, you are teaching your kids about alcohol use. Every time you choose not to drink, you are also teaching about alcohol use. What do you want your children to learn?

You are the strongest influence on your children. Your words and actions concerning alcohol use make a big difference in the choices they make now and when they're adults. Chances are you won't be there to guide them through every encounter with alcohol. But you can do a lot "behind the scenes" to help them stay healthy, strong, safe, and legal.

Tips for . . .

Parents with children ages birth to 5

- When you talk about alcohol, avoid statements that make it seem necessary or especially fun. Think, for example, about how these comments would sound to a four-year-old: "Whew, after the day I've just had, I could use a strong martini." "I better have a beer first if I'm going to do that."
- Always offer plenty of non-alcoholic options when you entertain in your home. Show your kids that grown-ups don't need alcohol to have fun together.

Parents with children ages 6 to 9

- If you choose to drink alcohol, be prepared for your kids to ask why they can't. Keep your answer simple, along the lines of, "Alcohol isn't good for growing bodies and brains."
- Don't laugh at or glorify the behavior of people who have had too much to drink, even on television or in movies.

Parents with children ages 10 to 15

- Write down for your kids a list of reasons for them to refuse if they are offered alcohol. Include things like, "I'll be in big trouble if my parents find out." "I'll get kicked off the team (or band or cheer squad) if coach finds out." Tell them they can also simply say, "I don't drink," and many of their peers will respect that.
- At this age, friends are beginning to have an even bigger influence on your children. And some young people are experimenting with alcohol. Get to know their friends and observe how your kids act around them. If certain friends seem to bring out negative feelings or behaviors, invite that young person to do things with you and your child together so that you can have a positive influence on the relationship.
- Let your teen know it's so important to you that they don't drink, that you will always provide a no-questions-asked-at-the-time ride home if they end up at a party where there is alcohol.

Parents with children ages 16 to 18

- Spend time with your teens doing things you both enjoy. When you are spending special time together, model responsibility.
- Make it clear that it is illegal and unacceptable to you for people under 18 to drink alcohol. Tell your children what consequences you will enforce if they do drink alcohol (e.g., can't use the car) and enforce them, even if it's "just once," or "just one beer."

Permission is hereby granted to City of St. Albert Family & Community Support Services to reprint the Developmental Assets® list, as well as sections of *Instant Assets*, and the MVParents® Web site for educational, non-commercial purposes only.