Teenagers: alcohol and other drugs

- Alcohol and drugs are dangerous and easy for students to buy.
- Every child is at risk: substance abuse does not discriminate.
- 5% of Middle School students and 14% of High School students in Montgomery County report ever having used prescription drugs without a doctor's order.

Risk factors for teen alcohol and other drug abuse

- Youth misconceptions:
  * Parents approve of their alcohol or drug use.
  * Substances are not dangerous.
  * “Everyone else is using.”
- Unlocked alcohol and medicines make them easy for students to access.
- Basic trust between adults and children involves monitoring to keep students safe.
- Teenagers take risks and make mistakes because their brains do not develop fully until they are 25 years of age.
- The earlier substance use begins, the greater the chance that addiction will develop.
- Times of transition (e.g., moving, changing schools, changing grade levels).

What can I do to keep my child healthy?

Resources:

- Continue to learn: [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)
- Talk and listen; have conversations, not confrontations. [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org); Parent Help Line 855-DRUGFREE. Start early, seize teachable moments, and stay engaged in your child’s life.
- Engage in positive youth activities and family time together: [www.infomontgomery.org](http://www.infomontgomery.org) or [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rec](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rec)
- Seek professional help at the first sign that your child exhibiting symptoms of an underlying mental health issue or substance use (e.g., drop in attendance/performance at school, change in appetite, irritability, angry outbursts). If there are signs of substance use, early intervention is critical. Call Pathway to Services, 301-354-4905.
- Lock up your alcohol and prescription medications: [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)
- Dispose of old or unwanted medicines to avoid harm to others: [www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/default.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/default.htm)

For the complete Fast Facts for Parents, visit [www.manyvoicessmartchoices.org](http://www.manyvoicessmartchoices.org)

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