

Pointers For Parents

Middle School: It's Not Too Early To Talk To Kids About Underage Drinking

(NAPSA)—It's never too early to let your children know how you feel about underage drinking.

Parents of middle school children might not think they need to worry about the subject, but statistics show that about 10 percent of 12-year-olds say they've tried alcohol.

By age 15, that number jumps to 50 percent. Government and health officials involved in "We Don't Serve Teens"—a national campaign to prevent underage drinking—advise parents to talk early, talk often and get others involved to protect kids from alcohol-related injury.

Talk early. Kids who drink are more likely to engage in risky behavior. In fact, underage drinking is linked to about 5,000 deaths every year. The reason most children choose not to drink is because their parents talk to them about it. The sooner you start talking to children about alcohol, the greater chance you have of influencing their decisions about drinking.

Talk often. One conversation isn't enough to give kids the information and guidance they need about alcohol. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, children who regularly talk to their parents about alcohol are less likely to drink. Try using everyday opportunities to talk—in the car, during dinner or while you and your child are watching TV.



Exercise your influence. The reason most children choose not to drink is because their parents talk to them about it.

Get others involved. Most kids who drink alcohol don't pay for it—instead, they get it from older friends and family members, at parties or from your liquor cabinet. So let the people around you know that you don't want your child to have access to alcohol. And let your kids know that the alcohol in your home is strictly off-limits.

"Teens who drink harm themselves and others," says Mary Engle of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). "It's never too early for parents to start letting their children know that they disapprove of underage drinking."

For more information about the risks of underage drinking and tips to help protect young people from alcohol-related injury, visit www.DontServeTeens.gov—a website maintained by the FTC, the nation's consumer protection agency.