



Talking about drugs in the family

Talking to your kids about sensitive issues can be difficult. However, children who learn about the risks of drug abuse are less likely to use drugs than those who do not. It is important for children to learn about drugs from their parents, rather than from their peers, who may give them inaccurate information.

Be informed – Be prepared to discuss drug issues openly and honestly. Educate yourself about the latest information on drugs and youth.

Set a good example – Remember that you are your child's most important role model, and he or she pays attention to what you say and do. Children look to parents for information about life decisions and choices.

Get involved, communicate – It's important to be involved and take an active interest in what is going on in your child's life. Know what your kids are up to, who their friends are and where they are when they are not at home. If you talk to them regularly about school and friends, it won't be as difficult to discuss more sensitive issues like drugs.

Be a good listener – Let your children know that they can always come to you with their problems. Show respect for their concerns, and try to understand their point of view. If your children can trust you and talk to you, they are less likely to make bad decisions.

Set limits, establish an agreement – Part of what you can do as a parent is set limits. Let your children know that you don't want them in risky situations. Plan ahead for potential problems and establish some acceptable agreements about drugs.

Be aware – Everybody wants to think that their child is unlikely to take drugs, but the reality is that nobody is beyond it. The following are warning signs that your child may be involved in drug use.

Signs to watch for in your child include:

- Change in friends
- Unexplainable withdrawal, isolation, depression
- Loss of interest in hobbies and sports
- Change in sleeping and eating habits
- Lack of interest in appearance
- Drop in academic performance
- Deteriorating relationships with family and friends
- Hostility and lack of cooperation
- Aggressive, rebellious behaviour
- Red eyes, runny nose unrelated to a cold or allergies
- An unexplained need for money

Sources:

www.pta.org

www.drugs.vic.gov.au

www.choix.org