

monitor your teen

Not all kids in Maine drink, yet all teens are at risk. A recent statewide survey reported that 65% of Maine students in grades eight through 12 have tried alcohol. In addition, 38% of the teens said they drank within one month of the survey, and 20% reported binge drinking (five or more alcoholic beverages in a row) within two weeks of the study¹. The numbers rise dramatically in higher grades. More importantly, most teens don't believe their parents would find out if they were drinking. According to the survey results, they're probably right. 83% of Maine parents² don't believe their teen is drinking—they believe "it's somebody else's kid." At least half of them are wrong. The question you have to ask is "do you really know?"

How Can You Tell if Your Teenager is Drinking?

Unfortunately, initial signs of teen alcohol use are typically not obvious. Unless a teen is having serious problems with alcohol, it may be hard to know they are drinking without regular monitoring. However, parents and caregivers who carefully monitor their teens can greatly reduce the risks of alcohol use and abuse. The most important fact to know is that kids who learn from their parents about the dangers and consequences of underage drinking are less likely to use and abuse alcohol³.

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When to Monitor

Kids are always at risk and there are countless opportunities for them to test the limits. Effective monitoring needs to be an ongoing process throughout your child's teenage years. It takes place continuously whenever they're away from you; after school, weekends, evening social events, etc. It is especially important to know where your teen is, who they are with, if alcohol will be present, and if there will be adult supervision.

Kids often get in trouble after school between the hours of 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM or during evening and weekend social activities. If you can't be with your child at this time, encourage your teen to do something positive with adult supervision, such as sports, jobs, clubs, or after school programs.

How to Monitor

BEFORE your teenager leaves, make sure that curfews and rules are understood and ask:

- Where are you going?
- What are you doing?
- Who will you be with?
- Will alcohol be present?
- Will there be adult supervision?

DURING

- Have your teenager check in while they're gone

AFTER

When your teenager returns:

- Check for coherence when kids return from social activities. (Some parents like to check unobtrusively for alcohol on their breath.)
- Talk about what happened while they were away
- Ask if alcohol was present
- Ask if any problems or peer pressure were encountered
- Ask how they handled problems or peer pressure

ONGOING

Talk frequently with your kids about alcohol. They are always at risk and consistency matters:

- Know who your kids' friends are
- Know the places they hang out
- Show up early to observe your teen's behavior
- Work with other parents—get lists of e-mails and phone numbers
- Occasionally check to see that your kids are where they say they are
- Teach your kids how to refuse alcohol without embarrassment
- Be a good role model for your teens; what you say—and do—matters (see the enclosed Self-Assessment page)
- Praise and reward good behavior

¹ Source: The 2002 Maine Youth Drug and Alcohol Use Survey (MYDAUS) of Maine 8th-12th grade student. Survey was instituted by the State of Maine to obtain information about the nature, severity, and range of substance use and abuse among adolescents.

² Conducted by Strategic Marketing Services on behalf of the Maine Office of Substance Abuse in 2002.

³ Excerpts on this page adapted from "Make a Difference" National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Keeping Your Kids Drug-Free" by the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, Office of National Drug Control Policy, and the "National Survey of American attitudes on Substance Abuse VI: Teens" February 2001 conducted by QEV Analytics and funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Nine More Stay Healthy Monitoring Tips for Maine Parents

GET INVOLVED

1. Teach kids how to have fun without drinking through sports, family activities, hobbies, clubs, etc.
2. Regularly help with homework
3. Encourage your teen to seek your help on important decisions
4. Eat dinners frequently as a family

ESTABLISH—AND ENFORCE— RULES AT HOME

5. Set and enforce limits and boundaries
6. Praise and discipline your teen when merited

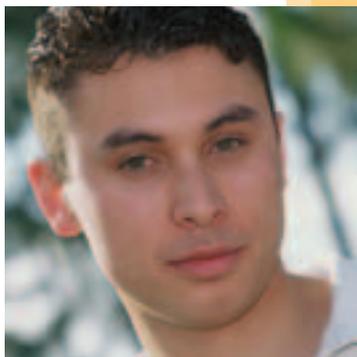
FOLLOW THROUGH—BE CONSISTENT

7. Do not furnish alcohol to teenagers
8. Do not allow teenagers to consume alcohol in your home
9. Support the legal drinking age of 21

TALK
frequently
with your kids
about alcohol.



Teach your
kids to have fun
WITHOUT
drinking.



Want more help?

CALL 1-800-499-0027 (In-State Only) **or 207-287-8900**

TTY: 1-800-215-7604 (In-State Only) **or 207-287-4475** (Special Equipment Needed)

OSA MAINE OFFICE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE www.maineparents.net