

## **Teens and alcohol**

Binge drinking, often begins around age 13. Early and excessive alcohol consumption are linked to missing school or work, getting arrested, and having a car accident. Alcohol use among adolescents has also been associated with considering, planning, attempting, and completing suicide, risky sexual behavior and increased vulnerability to coercive sexual activity.

Children who were warned about alcohol by their parents and children who reported being closer to their parents were less likely to start drinking. Children whose parents are involved in their lives—holding regular conversations, attending after-school events, listening to their problems—are less likely to drink.

Monitor alcohol use in your home. Connect with other parents and make a pact to keep teen gatherings alcohol free. Keep track of your child's activities. Develop family rules about teen drinking. When parents establish clear “no alcohol” rules and expectations, their children are less likely to begin drinking. While each family should develop agreements about teen alcohol use that reflect their own beliefs and values, some possible family rules about drinking are:

- Kids will not drink alcohol until they are 21.
- Older siblings will not encourage younger brothers or sisters to drink and will not give them alcohol.
- Kids will not stay at teen parties where alcohol is served.
- Kids will not ride in a car with a driver who has been drinking.

## **COULD YOUR CHILD DEVELOP A DRINKING PROBLEM?**

### **Does your child**

- Have a parent who is a problem drinker or an alcoholic?
- Have close friends who use alcohol and/or other drugs?
- Have current behavioral problems and/or are failing at school?
- Experience ongoing hostility or rejection from parents and/or harsh, inconsistent discipline?

### **Has your child**

- Been aggressive, antisocial, or hard to control from an early age?
- Experienced childhood abuse and/or other major traumas?
- Have parent(s) who do not support them, do not communicate openly with them, and do not keep track of their behavior or whereabouts.
- Began using alcohol or other drugs before the age of 15.

The more of these experiences a child has had, the greater the chances that he or she will develop problems with alcohol. Having one or more risk factors does not mean that your child definitely will develop a drinking problem. It does suggest, however, that you may need to act now to help.

