

# THE OTHER TALK

IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO START TALKING  
ABOUT ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS  
WITH YOUR CHILD.



## A GUIDE TO TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT ALCOHOL AND DRUGS.

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A parent's decision not to allow their child to drink is now supported by new secondary supply laws in most states and territories (see page 12).



Parents often comment that they have little influence over their teenager, but research shows they can have the greatest influence – more than friends and the media\*.



[theothertalk.org.au](http://theothertalk.org.au)

## WHAT IS THE OTHER TALK?

At some point we have all sat down with our parents for 'the talk'. It's not always easy, but learning about sex is an important conversation that every parent and child should have.

The Other Talk is about families talking openly about alcohol and other drugs and is an important step when preparing your child for a teenage party. However, you could start talking to your child as early as eight years to make sure they have the right information and attitudes when they reach high school. Starting the conversation early also means you create an understanding that when it comes to alcohol and other drugs, no question is too silly and no topic is off limits. These topics could include related issues such as peer pressure, health, and safety.



Research shows that young people consider parents to be credible sources of information about alcohol and drugs\*. However, many parents fear The Other Talk because it may raise questions that they feel ill-equipped to answer or explain appropriately.

This booklet is a resource for parents wanting to learn about alcohol and other drugs to protect their children from associated harms. Further information is available online [TheOtherTalk.org.au](http://TheOtherTalk.org.au).

\*Parenting guidelines for adolescent alcohol use

# HOW DO I START THE *conversation?*

There is no set formula for having The Other Talk, but here is some guidance to make the conversation easier:

## 1 Get the facts

There are a lot of myths about alcohol and other drugs. Use evidence-based sources like the 'Get the facts' section (page 6) of this booklet to give your child the most accurate information.

## 2 Be clear in your beliefs

Based on the evidence, clarify your view of alcohol and other drugs. For example, it's up to you whether your child drinks or not, but when making your decision consider the National Health and Medical Research Council's Australian alcohol guidelines, which state that the safest option for people under 18 is not to drink. The guidelines show evidence that parental monitoring and family rules about alcohol do reduce the likelihood of young people drinking.

## 3 Look for opportunities to start the conversation

Use relevant topics on the TV and radio or people you see who might be affected by alcohol and drugs as an opportunity to talk about these issues. It's best to start talking about alcohol and drugs early. Try to have the conversation in a quiet and comfortable environment e.g. the family dinner table. It's never too early and there is no limit to the number of conversations you can have.

## 4 Ask questions

Find out your child's views about alcohol and other drugs. Talk about what they would do in different situations.

## 5 Make sure they understand the harms

Using the 'Get the facts' section (page 6) of this booklet, make sure you and your child have the right information about alcohol and other drugs and correct any myths. Talk about the benefits as well as the harms of different drugs and why someone might use them. Don't exaggerate the harms as it will make you sound less credible.

## 6 Set rules and consequences

Explain your views on alcohol and other drugs and use the facts to back them up. Let your child know your rules and the consequences for breaking them. Help them develop ways of getting out of situations where their friends are using alcohol or other drugs and they don't want to be embarrassed by not taking part.

## EVERY CHILD IS DIFFERENT.

Knowing how your child will react in certain circumstances is important in understanding how to manage your child's risk against alcohol and other drug-related harms.

Young people don't have the experience of the world that adults have. They are still developing physically, emotionally and cognitively. That means:

- They are less able to perceive risks.
- They are still trying to work out their place in the world.

Before your child has their first alcoholic drink they will have formed attitudes and expectations about alcohol from parents, family, friends and media.

How much they are influenced by others is important when weighing up the risk of alcohol and drugs. Think about how susceptible your child is to the influence of peers and the attitudes and behaviours of their friends.

## ROLE MODELLING

**You don't need to tell your child about your past experiences with alcohol and drugs. It's important to be their parent not their friend. However, if you drink responsibly as a parent your child is more likely to do the same later in life. Role modelling responsible drinking means:**

- Following the Australian alcohol guidelines – no more than two standard drinks a day to reduce long-term harm and no more than four drinks on any one occasion to avoid immediate alcohol-related injury.
- Showing you don't always need a drink to have fun or wind down.
- Keeping track of how many standard drinks you've had, even when you aren't driving.
- Demonstrating that you can refuse a drink from a friend if you don't feel like it or you've had enough.

# GET THE FACTS

## Why should young people avoid alcohol?

**Y**oung people are at greater risk of alcohol-related harm than adults. The facts have changed – we now know more about the effects of alcohol than when we were children, and it is more harmful than previously thought. Alcohol exposes young people to a greater risk of injury and harm, and doing things they may later regret.

This is because young people's brains are still developing and they are likely to drink more and take more risks when drinking compared to older people. Drinking early can also cause problems with alcohol later in life and can damage the brain.

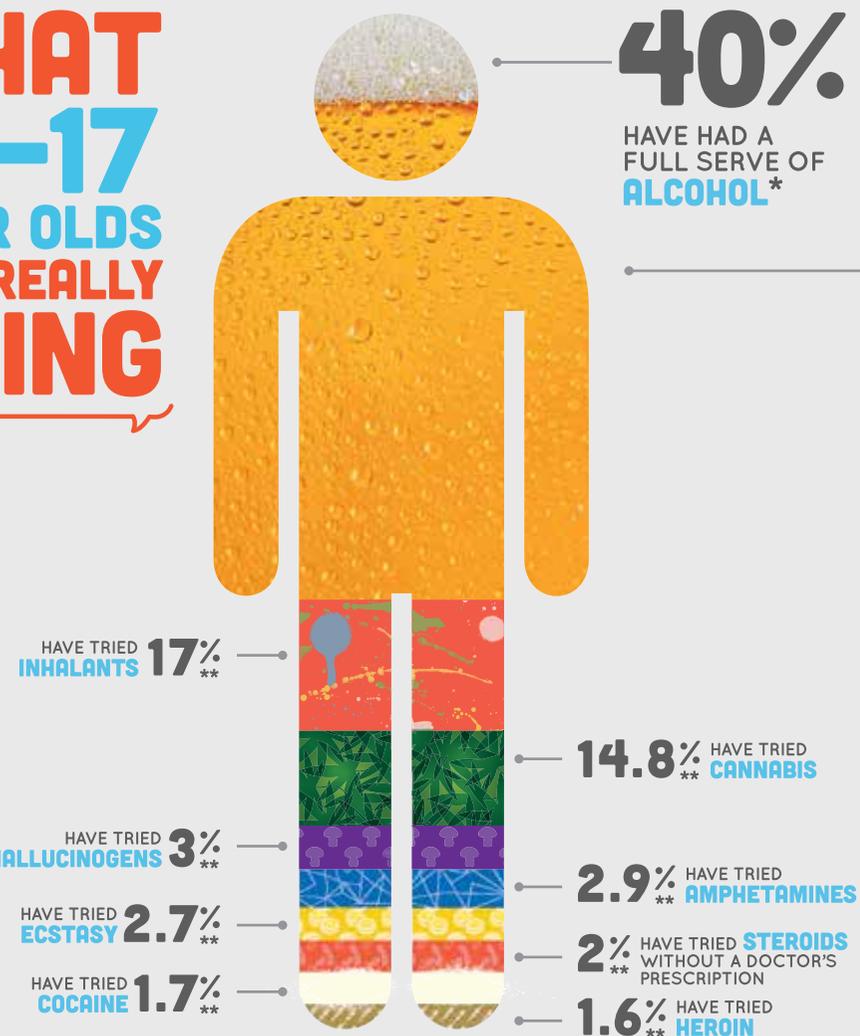
The Australian alcohol guidelines recommend that young people delay their first drink until they are 18 years old.

**i 1 IN 5**

15-18 year olds say they had sex when drunk which they later regretted\*

\* 4th National Survey of Australian Secondary Students, HIV/AIDS and Sexual Health.

## WHAT 12-17 YEAR OLDS ARE REALLY USING



### SHORT TERM

Alcohol contributes to the 3 major causes of teen death: injury, homicide & suicide.

Young people are more likely to drink to excess and take risks than adults.\*\*\*



### LONG TERM

Alcohol (and other drugs) can damage the developing brain.

This affects memory, learning and problem solving. And can cause mental health problems.\*\*\*

\* 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey report

\*\* 2011 Australian School Students Alcohol and Drug (ASSAD) Survey

\*\*\* 2009 Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol

## DOES CANNABIS CAUSE MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS?



Research shows there is a strong link between cannabis and mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. People who use cannabis frequently or in large amounts are most at risk of developing these problems – especially if mental health problems run in the family.

Young people who use cannabis may not experience associated mental health problems until later in life. Smoking cannabis weekly makes a young person twice as likely to develop an anxiety disorder in their late 20s compared to someone who doesn't use cannabis.

Mental health problems can lead to more general life problems, like conflict at home and at school/work, and financial issues. **The effects of cannabis may seem to help ease depression, but its use is likely to make depression worse in the long term.** People can become trapped in a cycle where cannabis both eases and causes their problems.

Cannabis may also trigger psychosis, although this is uncommon. Psychosis is a serious mental health condition, such as schizophrenia, where people can lose contact with reality, have hallucinations and delusions, and become paranoid.



Text a drug name and receive an automatic text back with its effects and links to further information.

**TXT A DRUG NAME TO**  
**THE AUSTRALIAN DRUG FOUNDATION**

(0439 835 563)

Standard network rates apply.  
Messages received are free.



## WHAT ARE SYNTHETIC DRUGS?

Synthetic drugs are designed to mimic established illicit drugs, such as cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy and LSD. They come in the form of powders, pills, and dried herbs that have been mixed with man-made chemicals. These drugs often come in branded packages, and are sold online and through adult stores and some tobacconists.

Given how rapidly the chemical structures of these drugs change to try and stay ahead of the law, it's difficult to know the common effects of them and what dose causes certain effects. However, **there is increasing evidence that synthetic cannabis is actually more harmful than cannabis.** There have also been a number of reported deaths from NBOMes, which are sold as synthetic LSD and are sometimes included in ecstasy pills.

The laws surrounding synthetic drugs are complex and differ between states/territories and between states/territories and federal law. These laws are also constantly changing, so a drug that was legal to possess yesterday, could be banned tomorrow.

## WHAT DO ICE AND SPEED LOOK LIKE?

Ice and speed are two different forms of the same drug – methamphetamine.

Ice, also known as crystal meth, generally comes in the form of white or brownish large crystals or a crystalline powder. It is the strongest type of methamphetamine available and regular use of ice can lead to dependence. It is usually smoked or injected.

Speed comes in the form of white or brownish powder, capsules or tablets. The powder can be injected, snorted or swallowed. Speed pills can be made up of binding agents, caffeine and sugar.

**Ice and speed are often packaged in aluminium foil, plastic bags or small balloons.**

These drugs can cause effects such as:

- Euphoria
- High levels of energy
- Excitement
- Increased heart rate
- Anxiety
- Paranoia
- Increased confidence and talkativeness

Taking too much ice or speed can lead to:

- Tremors
- Irregular breathing
- Seizures
- Death
- Loss of coordination



Find information on more drugs by visiting [TheOtherTalk.org.au](http://TheOtherTalk.org.au)

## WHAT DOES COMING DOWN FROM INHALANTS FEEL LIKE?

People who repeatedly inhale products like paint, cleaning fluid, glue, petrol, and aerosol sprays may experience:

- An initial rush or 'high'
- Confusion
- Disorientation
- Drowsiness
- Blurred vision

The 'come down' after using inhalants can last for several days and includes:

- Headaches
- Nausea
- Dizziness

Some inhalants such as cleaning products, correction fluid, aerosol sprays and petrol can cause permanent damage, especially if people use them heavily for a long period of time. Some of the chemicals in inhalants may build up in the body. They can irritate the stomach and the intestines, and can cause organ damage.

# SAYING YES OR NO TO A PARTY

## Contacting the host

When your child is invited to a party, it's a good idea to first consider whether they should be allowed to go. To help you make a decision you could contact the host (the parent) to get a picture of what sort of party it's going to be. Find out:

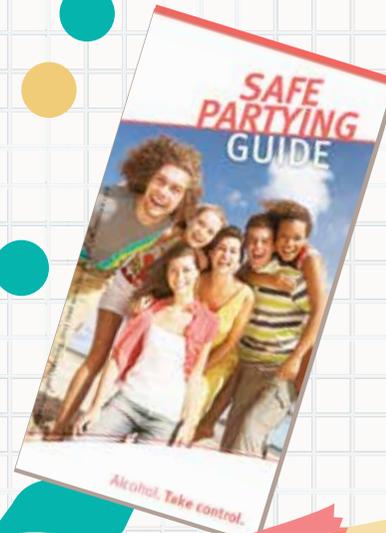
- The ages of the other children coming.
- Whether the party will have parental supervision.
- Whether there will be food and activities provided.
- The host's view on allowing or serving alcohol.
- Plans for preventing gatecrashers.
- When the party will end, so you can pick them up.

Sometimes it's difficult to decide whether to allow your child to attend a party. They may really want to go, but you may feel uncomfortable about the party arrangements. As a parent, you need to protect your child, so it's a valid choice to say no.



## GIVE YOUR CHILD SAFE PARTYING TIPS

If you do allow your child to go to a party, it's the ideal time to have The Other Talk because there are a number of ways you can protect them from having a bad experience.



## Make your views on alcohol and drugs clear

If you know alcohol will be available at the party, but you don't want your child to drink, then you can let the host and your child know your decision. Most states of Australia have secondary supply laws (see page 12) that prohibit anyone giving alcohol to your child without written or verbal permission from you.

## Brainstorm ways of saying no to alcohol and drugs

Ideas include, having a good excuse ready like, "I'm playing in a big game tomorrow" or "I'm on antibiotics". Make sure the excuses won't make them embarrassed. They could also just hold any alcoholic drinks they are given and put them down later.

## Have a plan for the night

Find out when the party is expected to finish and agree with your child how they are going to get home. This will help ensure they don't get into a car with a driver who's drunk, affected by drugs or doesn't have a licence. You can also help them develop a plan with their friends around what they will do if they lose each other like nominating a meeting place, having phone numbers written on a piece of paper in case phones get lost and who can be called in an emergency.

## Encourage them to stay with their friends

Talk about why it's important for them to stick with their friends, and let their friends know where they are going, what they are doing and who they are with if they do leave them. Discuss how your child can look after their friends. You could suggest how a fight could be defused and what to do if someone becomes very drunk. It's important to encourage your child to look after a friend who is drunk by staying with them, putting them on their side if they want to lie down in case they vomit, and dialing triple zero (000) if they pass out or are in trouble. Paramedics do not need to involve the police.



# KNOW THE LAW



## Underage drinking

Throughout Australia, it's illegal for staff of licensed premises to serve alcohol to minors. Except in limited circumstances in some jurisdictions, it's also illegal for adults to purchase alcohol on behalf of minors on licensed premises.

It's now also illegal in most states and territories in Australia to give alcohol to anyone under the age of 18 on private property, even in homes, without the young person's parent or legal guardian agreeing first. Anyone who supplies alcohol, including both adults and minors, to someone who is under 18 can be charged and receive a hefty fine. This means if someone who is under 18 gives alcohol to someone else who is underage, the person who supplied the alcohol can be fined. This legislation is called secondary supply law.

Find out about the law in your state or territory by visiting [TheOtherTalk.org.au](http://TheOtherTalk.org.au)

## Why are secondary supply laws important?

Almost 40 per cent of underage drinkers get alcohol from their parents, and only five per cent buy it themselves. So a good deal (55 per cent) of underage drinking happens when young people get alcohol from people who are not their parent or legal guardian.

## Drink spiking

Drink spiking is often associated with a drug being added to someone's drink to facilitate sexual assault. However, it's more common for a friend or acquaintance to add alcohol or more alcohol than expected to the victim's drink to have fun. Unfortunately, although the intention often isn't to cause the person harm, there can be serious physical and mental consequences of unintentionally drinking too much alcohol. For this reason there are serious penalties for drink spiking including fines and imprisonment.



 It's now illegal for an adult or a minor to give alcohol to someone who is underage without their parent's approval, even on private property.

# PLAN A SAFE TEEN PARTY

Using our safe party planner at the back of this book can help when having the conversation with your child about how their party will be organised and run on the night. Having a clear understanding about all the things listed on the planner can help make sure everyone has the same expectations about the party and has a good time on the night.

When filling in your planner, there are a number of things to consider, including whether you will provide alcohol or allow smoking and drugs at the party. Advice on this topic is on the next page.

**TheOtherTalk.org.au** has more information on:

- Planning a safe party
- Safe partying tips for schoolies
- Safe partying guide for young people
- Safe partying tips for adults

# ALCOHOL



# DRUGS

**Providing alcohol or allowing young people to drink at a party carries a number of risks. As the legal host of the party, you are responsible for providing a safe environment. You could be held liable if anything goes wrong, even after the party if the guests leave drunk.**

## Making a decision

When deciding whether to serve alcohol consider the Australian alcohol guidelines, which recommend people under the age of 18 shouldn't drink alcohol.

If you do decide to serve alcohol, perhaps at an 18th birthday party, remember that most states and territories in Australia have secondary supply laws. These laws mean that it's illegal for you to serve underage guests alcohol without their parent or legal guardian's permission – even if the party is in your home. It's also illegal for guests to pass underage guests alcohol without this permission. Hefty fines apply for both adults and minors.

## Serving alcohol

If you do provide alcohol at the party it's a good idea to:

- ✓ Tell parents ahead of time.
- ✓ Ensure no one under 18 years is served or given alcohol unless you have their parent's explicit approval.
- ✓ Set up an agreement between yourself and your child about alcohol and adult supervision.
- ✓ Only make alcohol available from one area and have a responsible adult serving who is not drinking alcohol.
- ✓ Take special care to control how much alcohol is drunk and only serve low-alcohol drinks. Make sure good non-alcoholic options are on hand.
- ✓ Avoid drinks like punch that could be easily spiked.
- ✓ Ensure that food is readily available for all party guests. Try not to serve salty snacks as they make people thirsty and could cause them to drink more.
- ✓ Plan for guests sleeping over if no one is able to take them home safely.

## Confiscating alcohol and drugs

- Whether you decide to allow alcohol or not, you may have to deal with guests bringing alcohol and drugs to the party. Talk about whether you will confiscate alcohol and drugs with your child and think about what you will do with them. If you return them at the end of the night, you could be held liable for any accidents that happen after the guest leaves the party. You could consider returning the substance to the guest's parent.

## Drunk guests

As part of setting the party rules, talk about what you will do if a guest becomes intoxicated. Intoxicated guests can ruin the party for others and cause dangerous situations. As the host, you have the right to send the guest home – although it's a good idea to organise transport to make sure they can get home safely.

## Smoking

You may want to set some ground rules about smoking, especially if the party is being held in your home. If you already have rules about smoking at home, they could also be used for the party.

## Transport

As a responsible host, you need to make sure your guests can get home safely because young people may not be able to make this judgment call. It's therefore a good idea to:

- ✓ Find out how your guests are getting home and who is driving. If a guest has been drinking, they shouldn't be driving.
- ✓ Encourage parents of younger children to pick them up at the end of the party.
- ✓ Encourage guests to come by taxi or with a driver who won't be drinking.

## Communicate party rules to guests

Once all of these rules have been discussed with your child, make guests aware of the rules. A good way of doing this is through a written invitation that requests the parent to RSVP on behalf of their child.

# SAFE PARTY PLANNER

## PRE-PLANNING

My party is on \_\_\_\_\_

Start time \_\_\_\_\_

Finish time \_\_\_\_\_

Budget \_\_\_\_\_

Theme/type of party \_\_\_\_\_

Dress code \_\_\_\_\_

Venue \_\_\_\_\_

Venue manager's contact details \_\_\_\_\_

Have you found out about the venue's insurance? Yes / No

What are the noise restrictions? \_\_\_\_\_

Is the venue easy to secure against gatecrashers? Yes / No

Is the venue easy to find and is there good parking for parents? Yes / No

## INVITATIONS

Written  SMS  Email

Social sites  Other \_\_\_\_\_

## GUEST LIST

Total number \_\_\_\_\_

Who is managing RSVPs \_\_\_\_\_

Have you discussed if there's anyone who should not be invited?

Who needs to be told about the party beforehand?

Neighbours  Guests' parents

Police  Other \_\_\_\_\_

## ENTERTAINMENT AND FOOD

What will make the party fun? \_\_\_\_\_

What food will be served? \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

## ALCOHOL

Will alcohol be served at the party? Yes / No

If yes, have you considered:

The Australian alcohol guidelines and secondary supply law?

How to avoid people getting drunk and accidents?

## DRUGS

Will smoking be allowed? Yes / No

What will happen if illegal drugs are brought into the party? \_\_\_\_\_

## TRANSPORT

Who will make sure that safe transport for the guests is arranged after the party? \_\_\_\_\_

If any guests can't get home safely where will they sleep? \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

## GATECRASHERS AND SECURITY

How can gatecrashers be prevented from entering? \_\_\_\_\_

Are any locations off limits to guests? \_\_\_\_\_

Where will pets go to keep them safe during the party? \_\_\_\_\_

Who will be the adult supervisors? \_\_\_\_\_

How will emergency vehicles easily access the party if necessary? \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

## PARTY RULES

Are there any other rules that need to be agreed to ensure everyone has fun on the night? \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_



[theothertalk.org.au](http://theothertalk.org.au)

**GrogWatch**

The GrogWatch blog is a good place to share stories with other parents and discuss alcohol issues in the community.

[grogwatch.adf.org.au](http://grogwatch.adf.org.au)

**The information in this booklet is a guide only, not a substitute for advice from your doctor or other health professional. In an emergency call triple zero (000).**

The DrugInfo website has information on:

- Support services in your state or territory
- Treatment options



[druginfo.adf.org.au](http://druginfo.adf.org.au)



1300 85 85 84



[druginfo@adf.org.au](mailto:druginfo@adf.org.au)

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