

KNOW Parent Tip #39

KNOW! To Prepare Your Child For New or Increased Peer Pressure.

Research clearly reveals that as students progress into higher grades, exposure to various substances and substance-using peers significantly increases; placing kids at greater risk of first-time use. For students transitioning into middle or high school or transferring to a new school system entirely, the onset of use can be as much as triple. Back-to-school undoubtedly calls for parents to be especially vigilant.

For many students, the desire to fit in and be liked among peers gives way to experimentation. Could this be the year your son or daughter is approached and pressured to take that first drink, smoke or pill? With preparation and a little practice, you can help your child clearly and confidently turn down such offers.

Step 1. Set the Scene and Pose this Question to your Child: Pretend I am someone you like and really want to be friends with and I say, "Come on, have a drink (or smoke) with me!" How would you respond? Your child is likely to say, "I would say no." Praise your child and know that for some kids, that really is all it takes. But keep in mind, it may not always be so easy.

Step 2. Press the Issue: What if I were someone a little older and you were even a little scared of me? Or what if I ignored your first response and handed you a drink or a joint anyway? Try tossing out some potential responses, but strongly encourage your child to come up with ideas of his/her own.

Step 3. Practice Assertiveness: The following formula can help your child feel prepared for times when "No thanks" just doesn't feel like enough.

Work together to complete the response (consider these sample fill-ins):

1. **I know you...** are being friendly; are trying to have fun; think beer is no big deal.
2. **But I...** am on the lacrosse team; have an agreement with my parents; am not thirsty.
3. **So I'm choosing...** not to risk my eligibility; to hold off until I'm older; to stick with soda tonight.

Put it all together, and the response you come up with may be something like this

I know you think beer is no big deal. But I am on the lacrosse team and we have a policy about alcohol. So I'm choosing to stick with soda tonight.

Step 4. Repeat, Repeat, Repeat: This cannot be a one-time discussion. The same child that is adamantly against alcohol and other drugs in early adolescence, may feel drastically different just a year or two later.

Five Simple Reminders from Parent to Child:

- I expect you to say "no" to a friend or a stranger if offered a drink, smoke or other drug.
- You can always just say "no" without an explanation.
- It is easier to say "no" if you practice ahead of time.
- If kids pressure you, you can always just walk away.
- Know that you can always talk to me, regardless of the situation. I am here for you.

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