NCADD
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

Ten Tips for Prevention for Youth

As a young person you are faced with many challenges. However, very few have the potential to affect your life in a more significant way than the decisions you make about alcohol and drugs. The decisions you make about alcohol and drugs will influence your health, your grades, your relationships, your job or career, or your freedom. Not to be too dramatic. . . but these are life and death decisions.

Bottom line – you are responsible for your own safety…**what are you going to do?**

Before we review our Ten Tips for Prevention--Youth, there are two important points to be aware of:

Age of First Use of Alcohol and Drugs:

Using alcohol and drugs before the brain has fully developed increases your risk for future addiction to alcohol and drugs dramatically. Young people who start drinking alcohol before age 15 are **5 times more likely** to develop alcohol abuse or dependence than people who first used alcohol at age 21 or older. Research for drug use and drug addiction have found similar results.

Family History of Alcoholism or Drug Addiction:

Whether a person decides to use alcohol or drugs is a choice, influenced by their environment -- peers, family, and availability. But, once a person uses alcohol or drugs, the risk of developing alcoholism or drug dependence is largely influenced by genetics. Alcoholism and drug dependence are not moral issues, are not a matter of choice or a lack of willpower. **Plain and simple, some people's bodies respond to the effects of alcohol and drugs differently. If you have a family history of alcoholism or addiction, you are four times more likely to develop a problem. To learn more:** Family History and Genetics.

So then, as a young person, what can you do to protect yourself and reduce the risk of alcohol

and drug problems? Here are **Ten Tips for Prevention--Youth**:

1. **Don't Be Afraid to Say No:** Sometimes, our fear of negative reaction from our friends, or others we don't even know, keeps us from doing what we know is right. Real simple, it may seem like "everyone is doing it," but they are not. Don't let someone else make your decisions for you. If someone is pressuring you to do something that's not right for you, you have the right to say no, the right not to give a reason why, and the right to just walk away.

2. **Connect With Your Friends and Avoid Negative Peer Pressure:** Pay attention to who you are hanging out with. If you are hanging out with a group in which the majority of kids are drinking alcohol or using drugs to get high, you may want to think about making some new friends. You may be headed toward an alcohol and drug problem if you continue to hang around others who routinely drink alcohol, smoke marijuana, abuse prescription drugs or use illegal drugs. **You don't have to go along to get along.**

3. **Make Connections With Your Parents or Other Adults:** As you grow up, having people you can rely on, people you can talk to about life, life's challenges and your decisions about alcohol and drugs is very important. The opportunity to benefit from someone else's life experiences can help put things in perspective and can be invaluable.

4. **Enjoy Life and Do What You Love - Don't Add Alcohol and Drugs:** Learn how to enjoy life and the people in your life, without adding alcohol or drugs. Alcohol and drugs can change who you are, limit your potential and complicate your life. Too often, "I'm bored" is just an excuse. Get out and get active in school and community activities such as music, sports, arts or a part-time job. Giving back as a volunteer is a great way to gain perspective on life.

5. **Follow the Family Rules About Alcohol and Drugs:** As you grow up and want to assume more control over your life, having the trust and respect of your parents is very important. Don't let alcohol and drugs come between your and your parents. Talking with mom and dad about alcohol and drugs can be very helpful.

6. **Get Educated About Alcohol and Drugs:** You cannot rely on the myths and misconceptions that are out there floating around among your friends and on the internet. Your ability to make the right decisions includes getting educated. Visit Learn About Alcohol

and Learn About Drugs. And, as you learn, share what you are learning with your friends and your family.

7. **Be a Role Model and Set a Positive Example:** Don't forget, **what you do is more important than what you say!** You are setting the foundation and direction for your life; where are you headed?

8. **Plan Ahead:** As you make plans for the party or going out with friends you need to plan ahead. You need to protect yourself and be smart. Don't become a victim of someone else's alcohol or drug use. Make sure that there is someone you can call, day or night, no matter what, if you need them. And, do the same for your friends.

9. **Speak Out/Speak Up/Take Control:** Take responsibility for your life, your health and your safety. Speak up about what alcohol and drugs are doing to your friends, your community and encourage others to do the same.

10. Get Help**!:** If you or someone you know is in trouble with alcohol or drugs, (What to Look For), get help. Don't wait. **You are not alone.**

For additional information, Learn About Alcohol, Learn About Drugs or Get Help may be helpful.