

Dangerous risk Smart risk

- If your teen wants to do something that you think is dangerous – talk about it.
 - Talk together about the pros and cons of what your teen wants to do.
 - Look for ways to make the activity safer. Would training or safety equipment help? A different time or place?
- Ask your teen why this activity is important. Is there something else that your teen would like to do that would meet the same need but be less dangerous?
- Have some give and take. If you must say “no” tell your teen why.

Tips for talking

- Talk often about everyday things. Every talk doesn't have to be a “big talk”.
 - Share your values, expectations, and concerns. Your teen needs to know where you stand.
 - Don't lecture. Ask teens what they think about things.
 - Use news stories and TV shows as ways to start talking about tough topics like alcohol, drugs and sex. Compare the risk-taking shown on TV with what might happen in real life.
 - Regularly eating meals together is a good way to share the day's events, and helps you stay connected to your teen.
 - Celebrate success! Let teens know you notice when they do things that show they are growing up.
- Talking about choices gives teens a chance to practice making decisions**

If your teen wants to do something that you think is dangerous – talk about it.

For more information:

www.aadac.com
(click “information for parents”)
www.sexualityandu.ca
(click “parents”)
www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/smartrisk
www.teachingsexualhealth.ca
(click “parents”)
www.canadianparents.com/article/teen-communication

Need health advice?

Call Health Link Alberta to get health advice from a nurse **ANYTIME** day or night:

- In Calgary at **403-943-LINK (5465)**
- In Edmonton at **780-408-LINK (5465)**
- Or call toll-free in Alberta at **1-866-408-LINK (5465)**

Remember
Even though they may resist, teens need their parents' support and guidance.

Teen Risk-Taking

Tips for Parents

Alcohol
Drugs
Driving
Sex
Violence

We all face risks every day

Teens are faced with making decisions about many new kinds of risk.

Choices about drugs, alcohol, driving, relationships and sex can be life changing.

- Alberta teens are **three times** more likely to die from injury than all other causes combined.
- **Over half** of reported sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in Alberta are among youth aged 15–24.

Part of growing up is learning how to manage risk and make smart choices.

Help your teen learn and practice smart risk.

- Risk-taking is important for a teen's development. Let teens try new things but make sure they understand how to stay safe.
- Taking on new responsibilities such as driving or a part time job will help a teen mature. You can reduce some risks by making sure that your teen gets safety training when learning new skills.
- Talk to your teen about how drug and alcohol use affects smart decision making.

It's about balance ...

Allow teens enough risk to grow.

Teach teens how to manage risk so that they are safe.

The teen brain and risk-taking

- Research shows that the brain is still developing until the mid-20s.
- The pleasure centre of a teen brain develops before the judgment centre.
- That's why teens often:
 - **don't** recognize the risk in the things they do
 - **don't** think about the bad things that could happen
 - **do** make decisions based on what they feel rather than what they know

Alcohol and drugs

- **Almost 75 percent** of Alberta teens (grades 7–12) have used alcohol at least once.
- **About one in five** Alberta teens has used cannabis (pot, weed) at least once.

Alcohol and drug use can lead to dangerous risks because substances affect:

- coordination
- reaction time
- memory
- self-control
- the ability to make good choices

Alcohol and drug use increases the risk of:

- injury
- death
- violence
- suicide
- unplanned and unprotected sex

Teens need to...

Push limits

Make mistakes

Seek thrills and take risks

Develop identity

Parents can...

Set limits. Talk about rules and allow more freedom as teens show more responsibility.

Expect mistakes and think of them as one way to learn. Have consequences when rules are broken.

Give teens the chance to try new things and take smart risks but not dangerous risks.

Let teens take on responsibilities. It builds confidence and shows that you trust them.

**What you say and do impacts your teen.
Be a healthy role model.**

- buckle up in the car – every time
- if you drink alcohol, drink responsibly and don't drive