

## You suspect your teen may be drinking alcohol. Now what?



- Don't fall prey to the concept that drinking alcohol is a right of passage for your child. Studies show that underage drinking can damage the developing mind and body. Additionally, your child may be drinking to cope with a mental-health issue or other problem.
- Don't launch into stories about the "good old days" of your youth. Glorifying good times that you had while drinking alcohol will only give them permission to continue the behavior.
- Don't dismiss your rules about drinking on "special occasions." Telling your teen that it's OK to drink at a wedding or a family party is a confusing message. Be consistent and make it clear that the drinking age is 21 and anything under that is illegal and unhealthy.
- Don't "protect your children" if you have alcoholism in the family. Explain that your family is genetically predisposed to the disease of alcoholism and addiction. The only preventative measure is not to drink alcohol.
- Do trust your gut. If you think there may be something wrong – you are probably right.
- Do insist that they tell you where they are going at all times. If they are going to a party – contact the parents to be certain their values and beliefs around parental supervision are in line with yours.
- Do ask your teen about why he or she is drinking alcohol. Explain that this is not acceptable under any circumstances and enforce consequences.
- Do consider getting a behavioral assessment for your teen if you suspect they have been drinking more than once. The sooner you find out what's really going on with your teen – the earlier you can give them the support, encouragement and potentially help they need to make better choices.