

# Prevention Through Connection



Warren  
Prevention Coalition

Promoting Health & Wellness through prevention in our Community

Fall/Winter 2024

## Celebrating the Holidays Should Not Include Underage Drinking

The holiday season often brings a more relaxed attitude towards alcohol, sometimes extending to teenagers. However, many studies have highlighted the negative impact of early alcohol consumption on adolescents.

### Possible reasons why parents may allow their teen to have a drink during holiday celebrations.

**Cultural or Family Traditions** In some cultures or families, consuming alcohol is seen as a rite of passage or a part of family gatherings and celebrations.

**Perceived Safety** Parents might believe it's safer for their teens to experiment with alcohol under their supervision rather than in unsupervised settings where there might be less control over consumption.

**Misconception About Building Tolerance** Some parents think that introducing alcohol at a young age can help their children build tolerance or teach them to drink responsibly.

**Peer Pressure and Social Norms** Parents might feel pressure from social or peer groups to allow their teens to drink, especially in social settings where other teens are drinking.

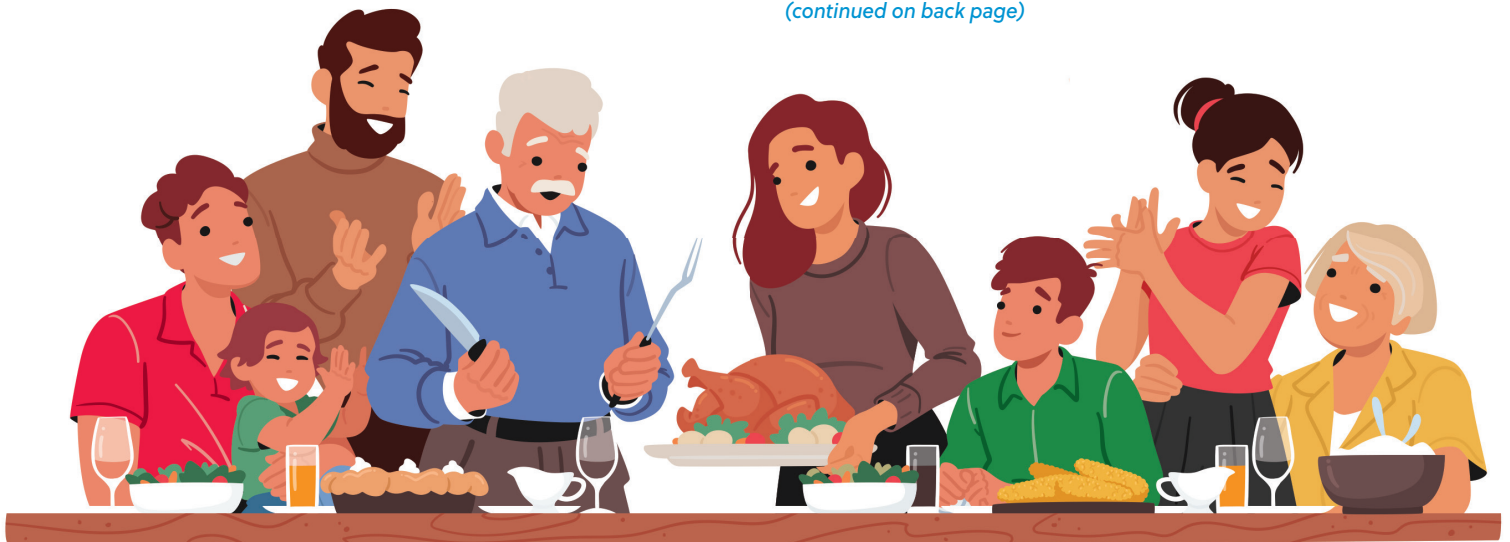
### The Startling Stats and Harsh Realities

**Early Drinking Can Lead to Bigger Problems** Studies are clear – teens who start drinking early are walking a dangerous path. One study from *PubMed* revealed that teens who begin drinking are more likely to end up binge drinking and consuming larger amounts of alcohol. It isn't just a holiday issue; it's a life-changing one.

**The Brain and Alcohol** The Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation highlights how alcohol impacts the developing teen brain. Alcohol hikes up dopamine, but not in a good way. It takes over the brain's natural pleasure paths and can lead to addiction. Plus, the teen brain is like a live wire – more sensitive, more reactive, and more vulnerable to the effects of alcohol.

**Long-term Damage** We're not just talking hangovers. Alcohol can lead to serious health issues like liver damage and heart problems. This isn't about one drink; it's about a pattern that can harm their health for years to come. As researchers reported in 2019, using drugs and alcohol at an early age has been associated with multiple problems later in life such as negative health, social, and behavioral outcomes.

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# Parents Play An Important Role in Youth Substance Use Prevention

Involvement and support of parents and caregivers are the foundation for preventing youth substance use. Frequent conversations are one of the most effective tools parents and caregivers can use to connect with their children.

Children of parents who talk to them about the dangers of substances early and often are 50% less likely to use substances than those that don't get those messages at home (NCADD, 2015). Talking with children as early as age six and continuing right up until they are college-age, parents and caregivers have a key role in bolstering their child's ability to make healthy decisions for themselves.

## Tips For Talking to Your Children at Different Ages

### Ages 6 – 9

- Provide the facts so they see you as a credible source.
- Help them develop decision-making skills and prepare them to better handle peer pressure.
- Discuss how to avoid and escape dangerous situations that are unsafe or make them feel uncomfortable.
- Talk about drug-related messages they see and hear through TV, news, movies, social media and at school.

### Ages 10 – 12

- Get to know the caregivers of your child's friends. Make sure they're on the same page about preventing substance use.
- Peak your preteen's curiosity. They love to learn facts, especially strange ones, and want to know how things work.
- Talk about the difference between fantasy and reality when watching TV, movies or things they may see in social media.
- Tell them they can use you as an excuse during peer pressure: "No, my parents would ground me forever if I vaped."

### Ages 13 – 15

- Emphasize family values, expectations and consequences.
- Providing praise for making positive decisions can help build their self-esteem and self-image.
- Be aware of your child's choices of friends; substance use in teens often starts as a social behavior.
- Assist them in developing assertive tactics and prepared responses that are helpful in saying "no" to peer pressure.

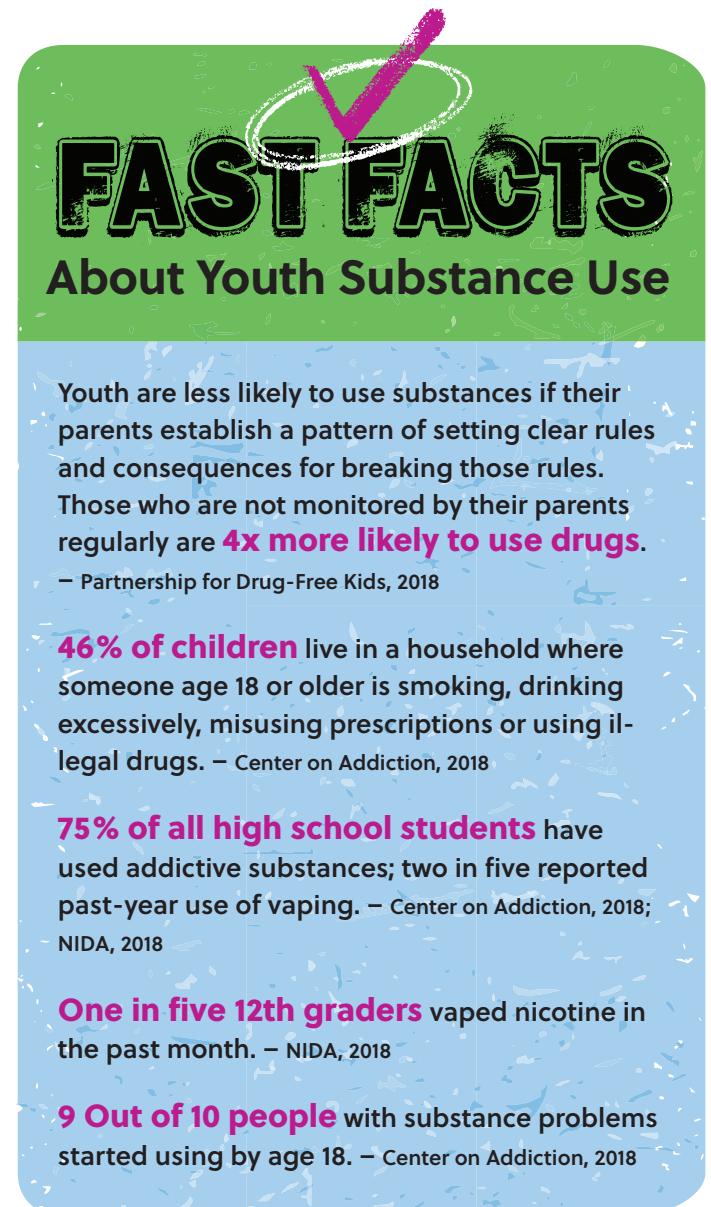
### Ages 16 – 18

- Encourage participation in healthy activities with peers.
- Teach them how to stand up for their beliefs to feel empowered to resist when being pressured to make high-risk choices.
- If they resist, be willing to back off and try another time. This shows you respect their privacy.
- Emphasize consequences of abusing drugs, such as decreasing the chances of getting into college or getting a job.

### Ages 19 – on

- Reach out periodically and keep the lines of communication open when your child is away from home.
- It's a good time to talk with your child about over-the-counter and prescription medicine safety.
- Discuss risks associated with binge drinking.
- Encourage them to intervene when roommates or friends are in trouble with substance abuse (passed out, unconscious.)

*In closing, try to have ongoing conversations about substance use with your children. Repetition is key! Adults modeling healthy living is another good way to deliver the right message when it comes to substance use. And remember, it's never too late to start talking with your child of any age.*



**FAST FACTS**  
About Youth Substance Use

Youth are less likely to use substances if their parents establish a pattern of setting clear rules and consequences for breaking those rules. Those who are not monitored by their parents regularly are **4x more likely to use drugs**.  
– Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, 2018

**46% of children** live in a household where someone age 18 or older is smoking, drinking excessively, misusing prescriptions or using illegal drugs. – Center on Addiction, 2018

**75% of all high school students** have used addictive substances; two in five reported past-year use of vaping. – Center on Addiction, 2018; NIDA, 2018

**One in five 12th graders** vaped nicotine in the past month. – NIDA, 2018

**9 Out of 10 people** with substance problems started using by age 18. – Center on Addiction, 2018

# Evolution of E-Cigarette Industry Has Included Targeting Youth

E-cigarettes have been the most commonly used tobacco product among U.S. youth since 2014.

While current e-cigarette use among middle and high school students has declined significantly, it's still a public health concern. Among students who used e-cigarettes in 2024, 38.4% reported frequent use and 26.3% reported daily use.

## The Evolution of E-cigarettes

E-cigarettes first entered the market in 2007 and have evolved many times since then, with older versions resembling regular cigarettes, and eventually moving to disposable e-liquid pods. Today's rapidly evolving e-cigarette market includes many varieties of disposable e-cigarettes, or single-use e-cigarettes. The latest products contain some of the highest nicotine levels ever seen in tobacco products. Some claim to be "tobacco-free" but still contain lab-created synthetic nicotine.



E-cigarette sales have rapidly escalated in their relatively short history. Overall e-cigarette sales, as well as the total number of e-cigarette brands, increased by more than 46% between January 2020 and December 2022. Disposable e-cigarettes have nearly tripled in nicotine strength, and dropped in price by nearly 70% between 2017 and 2022.

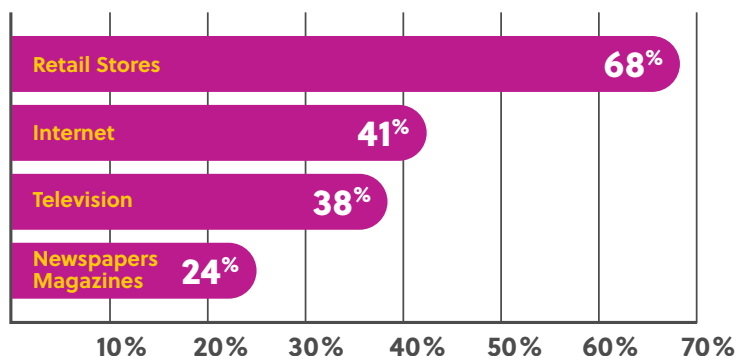
## E-cigarette Marketing and Youth Targeting

Manufacturers and sellers of e-cigarettes aggressively target young people. There are few federal restrictions on e-cigarette marketing, allowing companies to promote their products through traditional outlets like TV and radio — despite a ban in 1971 on cigarette advertising in both outlets to reduce cigarette marketing to youth. E-cigarette companies also take advantage of other marketing outlets, including the internet, social media, retail environments, and recreational events.

## E-cigarette Marketing Facts

■ In 2021, more than 75% of middle and high school students reported exposure to marketing or advertising of any nicotine or tobacco product — including e-cigarettes.

## Where Do Youth Most Likely See E-cigarette Ads



- Pro-e-cigarette content can increase perceptions that e-cigarettes are stylish, popular, safe for use, and have a pleasurable taste and smell.
- Exposure to such content can normalize and glamorize e-cigarette use and has been strongly associated with current e-cigarette use among young adults.
- E-cigarette companies have appealed to youth by marketing kid-friendly candy and food-flavored products.
- E-cigarettes are promoted heavily through retail stores, online (YouTube, Twitter and mobile ads), and through TV ads.

*Adapted from article by truthinitiative.org.*



*Are you watching kids scroll through life, with their rapid-fire thumbs and a six-second attention span?*

Physician and filmmaker Delaney Ruston saw that with her own kids and learned that the average kid spends 6.5 hours a day looking at screens. She wondered about the impact of all this time and about the friction occurring in homes and schools around negotiating screen time — friction she knew all too well.

*Screenagers*, is a series of award-winning documentaries created by Delaney that explores the struggles over social media, video games, academics and internet addiction. *Screenagers* reveals how tech time impacts kids' development and offers solutions on how adults can empower kids to navigate the digital world and find balance. **You can find more information about Screenagers films at [screenagersmovie.com](http://screenagersmovie.com).**

## Myths vs. Facts

**Myth:** "One small drink is fine. It's the holidays."

**Fact:** Every drink can impact a teen's health and well-being. The risks don't take a holiday break.

**Myth:** "Drinking at home with me is safer."

**Fact:** No environment makes early drinking safe. The risks remain, wherever they take that first sip.

## Four Ways to Keep the Holidays Alcohol-Free for Teens

While adults might partake in holiday cheers, it's crucial to keep our teens alcohol-free. Here's how to make it happen:

**Honest Holiday Chats** Use the holiday gatherings as a chance to chat with your teen about why alcohol is off-limits for them, even during special occasions. Share your concerns and the specific risks associated with teen drinking.

**Festive Alternatives** Get creative with holiday fun that doesn't involve alcohol. Plan family activities, play games, bake festive treats, or have a movie marathon — anything that makes the season special without the need for alcohol.

**Lead by Example** Show your teen that the holiday spirit isn't about what's in your glass. If you choose to drink, do so responsibly and emphasize that this is an adult choice, with different impacts on adults and teens.

**Set Clear Holiday Rules** Be clear about your expectations regarding alcohol use during the holidays. Make sure your teen knows the rules are different for them, for good reasons.

As we celebrate and make memories, let's ensure our teens are part of the joy — safely and soberly. The data doesn't lie. Alcohol and teens are a risky mix, holiday or not. As parents, guardians, and educators, it's our responsibility to protect adolescents from these dangers and encourage them to find joy and fulfillment in healthier, safer ways. This holiday season, let's commit to supporting our teens in making choices that promote their well-being and future success.

*Adapted from article by [naturalhigh.org](http://naturalhigh.org).*

## Parent Tips for Talking to Your Child About Substance Misuse

**Ask open-ended questions** Ask questions that will elicit more than just a "yes" or "no" response. Start conversation with "Tell me more about..."

**Be positive** Find positives in a situation, no matter how difficult it may seem. "Thank you for your honesty. I really appreciate it."

**Let them know you hear them** Reflect back what you are hearing verbatim or just the sentiment. "I'm hearing you feel overwhelmed and say drinking relaxes you. Is that right?"

**Sum up and ask questions** Show you're listening the entire time and ask for their input. "Did I get everything? Is there anything more you would like to talk about?"

**Ask permission** Ask if it is OK for you to speak with them about their concerns and to offer some feedback. "Are you OK me asking you this? Do you mind if I offer some advice?"

**Offer empathy & compassion** Demonstrate understanding. "I hear that you feel smoking pot helps your anxiety. I'm sorry you're feeling anxious; I know that's a really difficult feeling. Can we think of some other ways to help you relax?"

## Community RESOURCES

East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP)  
100 Bullocks Point Ave., Riverside, RI 401) 437-1000

East Bay Center 2 Old County Rd., Barrington, RI  
(401) 246-1195

East Bay Recovery Center 31 Railroad Ave., Warren, RI  
(401) 302-6231 or 401-289-2055

BH Link Hotline — (401) 414-LINK (414-5465)  
24/7 — help with a behavioral healthcare crisis.

St. Mary of the Bay Food Pantry  
645 Main St., Warren RI (401) 245-7000 ext 19

Warren Health Equity Zone (HEZ)  
790 Main St., Warren RI (401) 486-5195

For information, contact Ann Marie Roy at [ARoy@townofwarren-ri.gov](mailto:ARoy@townofwarren-ri.gov) or Maria Ursini at [Mursini@townofwarren-ri.gov](mailto:Mursini@townofwarren-ri.gov).

Funding for this newsletter from SAMHSA's Drug Free Communities Program (DFC) and Legislative Funding.

[warrenprevention.com](http://warrenprevention.com)



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