

Dose of Knowledge

K-2 | 3-5 | 6-8 | 9-12

Critical Conversations with Children and Teens



Caregiver Guide

Dose of Knowledge

Overview

The Dose of Knowledge program strives to empower educators, pharmacists, parents and other members of the community to address substance misuse and educate children and teens to make good decisions while considering their health and well-being. This Caregiver Guide was created to help guide caregivers in critical conversations with young people in their lives.

This guide is broken down into four grade bands: K–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–12 to provide targeted conversations with students of various age groups. This guide will help to initiate conversations early and often to help prepare students to make good decisions throughout their school-age years. Having these conversations arms students with information and facts so that they will be less likely to experiment or rely on their peers for knowledge surrounding substance misuse and making healthy decisions. By having direct conversations about substance misuse and their harmful effects, you will prepare your student with the information that they need to help them stay safe and make smart choices. We encourage you to keep communication and conversations open as your student grows into adulthood so they are getting information from you rather than relying on their peers, social media, or firsthand experiences.

Background

How should I talk to my student about substance misuse?

It is important to keep your tone calm and use terms that are age appropriate. This guide and the [CVS Health Dose of Knowledge](#) website can help guide you in determining which terminology you should use. We want children and young adults to feel like they can confide in their caregivers and trust them as they make decisions that impact their health and well-being.

Objective

To support and provide resources for these critical conversations.

Parents and caregivers can have critical ongoing conversations with their children regarding substance misuse. One of the most influential factors during a child's adolescence is maintaining a strong, open relationship with adults in their life. When caregivers create supportive and nurturing environments, students make better decisions.

Goals

- Present information about substance misuse in a simple and engaging fashion.
- Provide children with a working knowledge of the effects of substance misuse.
- Help children understand how substance misuse can disrupt their lives and impact the entire family.
- Encourage children to develop decision-making skills.
- Encourage children to ask questions and voice their opinions openly.
- Practice refusal skills before students need to use them.
- Establish a supportive climate in the home so that important issues may be discussed openly.

Beginning the Conversation Early

You may be wondering how to have conversations about alcohol or substance misuse with elementary students. You might be asking yourself how prevention could be effective at such a young age. There are a wide variety of healthy ways to communicate how to make healthy decisions at this age.

Try beginning with these age-appropriate themes and begin by defining what health is. As young people grow, they benefit from learning what health is, why it's valuable and how to make healthy decisions.

Helpful conversation starters on this topic include asking children:

- What does it mean to be healthy?
- What does it feel like to be healthy?
- What things do you do to stay healthy every day?
- What daily habits and decisions do we make to support our health?
 - Why is it important to brush your teeth?
 - Why is sleeping and napping important for our brain and health?
 - Why should we be good at eating fruits and vegetables?

Promote Well-being and Healthy Choices

Helping children and teens enjoy and identify substance-free pleasures are healthy opportunities that are naturally rewarding. When children enjoy healthy activities that bring them joy, they're less likely to resort to drug use.

Create a list of healthy things they do or can do to bring them happiness. Their choices could include many different items like:

- Spending time with pets or in nature
- Eating their favorite healthy foods
- Playing games or sports with friends
- Going fishing, hiking, camping
- Giving and receiving hugs from family
- Immersing themselves in stories through reading or movies
- Listening to, playing or dancing to music
- Volunteering at their school or in their community
- Having conversations with friends
- Cooking or sharing a meal with family

Help them to make this list specific and post their lists somewhere visible. Consider making a family plan to ensure that time is spent daily, incorporating at least one element on the list. Be purposeful in recognizing when this goal is not met and identify ways to try and incorporate these items.

Trusted Adults

It is important that young children and teens know how to seek out and establish healthy relationships with trusted adults. These relationships may help discourage future alcohol and drug use. Connections with caretakers, educators, coaches, family friends, counselors and other adults help guide young people in making healthy choices and decisions.

Ask children and teens which adults they look up to and trust. Help them understand the value of trusting an adult who can support them. The more trusted adults in a child's life, the more opportunities they will have to benefit from child-adult prevention conversations.

Kindergarten through 2nd Grade

What is appropriate to discuss with an 18-year-old and a 5-year-old about alcohol and substance misuse varies greatly. A five-year-old should know about medication safety. Remember to take advantage of "teachable moments" now. If you see a character in a movie or on TV take medication or misuse substances, talk about it. Discuss why some medications are prescribed and how they help us. This can lead to a talk about how we should not share our prescriptions and about other substances and how their misuse may cause harm.

Here are some tips on what to share with young children about medication safety:

- Sometimes when we are sick, we take medication or medicines.
- When we take medication as directed, it helps us to feel better.
- We should only take medication when it is given by a trusted adult.
- If someone other than a trusted adult offers you medication, tell a trusted adult immediately.

Remember to continue to have conversations with your child and continue to build trust while they grow. This will help them to continue to make healthy choices throughout their life. Check out other resources like [SAMHSA](#) to learn more about talking to the children in your life.

Activity

Now that you have begun the conversation, allow your child to share what they know by completing the *Share What You Know Student Capture Sheet*. Encourage them to write and draw their ideas. After they complete the activity, discuss what they created and ask them if they have any questions.

Next, have your child complete the *When You Are Sick Student Capture Sheet* and discuss their responses after. Watch the [CVS Dose of Knowledge: Medication Safety \(K-2\)](#) video together. If needed, pause throughout the video to discuss the ideas being shared. Think of some important ideas you learned together during the video. Create a *Six-Word Story* together to share the most important ideas and summarize the video in only six words. This activity helps them to remember and recall what they learned in the video. If you have time, create an illustration together that showcases what you learned together! Give them the opportunity to share what they learned with other family members.

Materials

You'll need internet access and a device, like a tablet or smart phone, to access the CVS Dose of Knowledge video:

- [Dose of Knowledge: Medication Safety \(K-2\)](https://www.doseofknowledge.com/educators/#K-5) <https://www.doseofknowledge.com/educators/#K-5>
- Print out the Student Capture Sheets, pages 11-13 of this document
- Markers or crayons

3rd through 5th Grade

As children grow older, it's important to begin by asking them what they have heard about substance misuse or abuse. Ask in a nonjudgmental, open-ended way, so you are more likely to get an honest response. They may have heard about this topic through TV, social media, peers, or school.

What questions do they have? Remember to show your children that you are listening and really paying attention to their concerns and questions.

Kids this age usually are still willing to talk openly to their parents and caregivers about sensitive topics. Talking now helps keep the door open as kids get older so they continue to share their thoughts and feelings.

Remember to continue to have conversations with your child and continue to build trust while they grow. This will help them to continue to make healthy choices throughout their life. Check out other resources like [SAMHSA](#) to learn more about talking to the children in your life.

Activity

Allow them to share what they know by asking your child to consider what they would do when faced with various situations by completing the *Making the Right Choice Student Capture Sheet*. After completing the activity, take the time to discuss each of the scenarios and what actions should be taken. Discuss other possible situations that might come up at school or at home before beginning *Staying Well and Being Responsible with Medicine*. Use this opportunity to discuss the importance of making responsible decisions and medication safety. That discussion leads to the *Medication Matching* activity where you can work on this cut and paste activity together.

Watch the [Dose of Knowledge: Medication Safety](#) video together with your student. Take time to pause the video and discuss important ideas while adding ideas to the *Z Chart Graphic Organizer Student Capture Sheet*. The Z Chart will help your child process what they learned and consider questions they may still have. If needed, replay the video to remember important ideas. Complete the activity by creating a sentence together that explains the main idea of the video and finish the activity by adding a visual representation.

Materials

You'll need internet access and a device, like a tablet or smart phone, to access the CVS Dose of Knowledge video:

- [Dose of Knowledge: Medication Safety \(3-5\)](https://www.doseofknowledge.com/educators/#K-5) <https://www.doseofknowledge.com/educators/#K-5>
- Print out the Student Capture Sheets, pages 14-18 of this document
- Scissors
- Glue Stick
- Colored Pencils or markers
- Pencil

6th through 8th Grade

Teens and pre-teens are searching for their freedom and identity. They require your attention and guidance, but they want to have a say about when and how they receive it. Teens also start to look to friends and social media for advice and are more hesitant to talk to adults. As heavy media consumers, they may have exaggerated beliefs about substance use based on exposure to media and be misinformed by peers.

Make sure to continue to share facts with your child. Teens still value information that you share with them. Be honest with them to empower them to make their own healthy decisions.

Take advantage of teachable moments. Be sure to help them understand:

- Addiction is a disease.
- Children with a family history of substance misuse may be more likely to develop a substance use disorder.
- Any misuse is a risk. Substance misuse can alter brain function leading to lasting impacts on cognitive abilities and addiction. Teens are even more at risk since they are still developing.
- The most common choice among middle school students is non-use. However, as they advance through middle school they may see this change. Let them know that you are available to have open and honest conversations with them. Remind them that they also have other trusted adults in their lives that they can talk to.

Teach Them to be Aware of Setting Boundaries:

Help teens learn how to assert their own decisions with their closest friends, their first crush or the most popular kids in school. They are more likely to try substances when they are invited by someone they know and admire.

Do not be afraid to ask:

- "What would you say to a friend who offered you alcohol or any other substance?"
- "If someone you care about doesn't respect your opinion or choice, what can you do?"
- "What other situations are you worried about encountering?"

Help them formulate responses if a situation involving substance use arises. A simple "no" may be all they need, but they will benefit from your support in brainstorming a variety of healthy ways to respond in a range of uncomfortable or potentially dangerous situations.

Activity

As you have conversations with your child, allow them to share what they know by asking questions and invite them to discuss what they would do when faced with various situations by using the *Discussion Cards* in the capture sheets. While completing the activity, take the time to discuss each of the scenarios and what actions should be taken. Discuss other possible situations that might come up at school or at home before beginning *Peer Pressure*. Use this opportunity to discuss the importance of making responsible decisions.

Students can learn more about how to use exit strategies and refusal skills by investigating the [CVS Prescription Medication Misuse and the Adolescent Brain and Body Student Module](https://www.doseofknowledge.com/educators/#StudentsModule). <https://www.doseofknowledge.com/educators/#StudentsModule>.

6th through 8th Grade (Continued)

Watch the [Dose of Knowledge: Peer Pressure](#) video together with your student. Take time to pause the video and discuss important ideas, while adding ideas to the *Summing It Up Organizer Student Capture Sheet*. The *Summing It Up* graphic organizer will help in processing what is learned and consider questions they may still have. As students watch the video, they will work individually to generate a list of important supporting details, leading them to determine the main idea of the video. By focusing attention on the selection of five of the most important main words or phrases from the video, students narrow down concepts. Students will complete the activity by creating a sentence that explains the main idea of the video and provide evidence to justify their decisions. Play the video, pausing frequently. At each pause, provide 60 seconds for students to list their observations in the appropriate section of the graphic organizer. Then play the video again without pausing. Ask students to put an asterisk next to five of the most important ideas needed to understand the video. Based on the top five lists, students write a 1–2 sentence summary. Finally, students write a word or phrase for the main idea.

Materials

You'll need internet access and a device, like a tablet or smart phone, to access the CVS Dose of Knowledge video:

- [Dose of Knowledge: Peer Pressure](https://www.doseofknowledge.com/educators/#6-8) <https://www.doseofknowledge.com/educators/#6-8>
- [CVS Prescription Medication Misuse and the Adolescent Brain and Body Student Module](https://www.doseofknowledge.com/educators/#StudentsModule) <https://www.doseofknowledge.com/educators/#StudentsModule>
- Print out Discussion Cards, pages 19–20 of this document
- Print *Sum It Up Student Capture Sheet* on page 21 of this document
- Pencil or pen
- Markers **optional*
- Recording device **optional*

9th through 12th Grade

High school students have opinions on health matters and can play a significant role in their own health outcomes. However, adults in their lives can help protect them against risky behaviors by staying involved in their lives and checking in with them regularly. They may still look to friends and social media for advice and may still be hesitant to talk to adults. As heavy media consumers, they may have exaggerated beliefs about substance use based on exposure to media and be misinformed by peers. Make sure to share facts with your child. Be honest with them to empower them to make their own healthy decisions, by supporting them through frequent, relevant conversations and strong, trusting relationships.

Be Curious and Ask Questions:

Invite your child to teach you about what they are learning from friends, online, or at school. You'll gain insight into what they believe, like: what health means to them, what they find risky, and how they view the world around them.

Use open-ended, thought-provoking questions such as:

- What are your beliefs about substance misuse and drug laws?
- How do you and your friends define healthy and unhealthy lifestyles?
- What do you know about opioids, nicotine, or marijuana?
- What percentage of kids in your school do you think use substances?
- Why do you think some people use alcohol or substances?
- Do you know anyone who has a prescription for asthma, ADD or anxiety?

- What do you know about prescription substance misuse?

Activity

As you have conversations with your child, allow them to share what they know by asking questions and invite them to discuss what they would do when faced with various situations by using the *Discussion Cards* in the capture sheets. While completing the activity, take the time to discuss each of the scenarios and what actions should be taken. Discuss other possible situations that might come up at school or at home before beginning *Opioids and the Brain*. Use this opportunity to discuss the importance of making responsible decisions about using medications.

Watch the [Dose of Knowledge: Opioids and the Brain](#) video together with your student. Take time to pause the video and discuss important ideas. As students watch the video, pause frequently. At each pause, provide opportunities to discuss the importance of the video's content. Then play the video again without pausing. Tell students that you would like them to share what they have learned about opioids by creating a public awareness infographic to educate their peers and or siblings about the risks of opioid misuse.

The requirements of each infographic are to include information with images to show:

- How opioids affect the teenage brain.
- How misuse can lead to substance use disorder.

If using computers, there are several free resources that could be used to make their infographics (Canva, Piktochart, Easel.ly, etc.)

Explain that an infographic is a way to communicate information quickly using pictures, charts, and just a little text.

9th through 12th Grade (Continued)

Materials

You'll need internet access and a device, like a tablet or smart phone, to access the CVS Dose of Knowledge video:

- **Dose of Knowledge: Opioids and the Brain** <https://www.doseofknowledge.com/educators/#9-12>
- Print out Discussion Cards, pages 22–23 of this document
- Materials for creating an Infographic:
 - Pencils
 - Colored Pencils
 - Markers
 - Paper
- Or, tech tools for creation (Discovery Education Studio Board, Canva, Piktochart, Easel.ly)

Final Thoughts: Conversations to Prepare Teens for Adulthood

We give teens a great deal of responsibility. Adults can help to protect teens against risks by staying involved. Check in with your teenage child regularly, and support them through frequent, relevant conversations, and strong, trusting relationships.

Keep the Conversation Current and Casual

Prevention is most effective when it is ongoing. Skip the one-time lectures and have frequent two-way conversations about substance misuse. Start with topics about which kids are experts, like pop culture or peers, and then talk health from there.

Teach Them to Think Critically

Help your child use future-oriented thinking to curb risky impulses and make their own healthiest decisions. Conversations with caring adults can help teens refine their critical-thinking skills in ways that will keep them healthy and safe.

- It is important to use prescription medication as prescribed. Misusing prescription medications is illegal and dangerous.
- Common symptoms of substance misuse can be physical, behavioral, or be displayed in new habits or preoccupations.
- Substance misuse can alter brain function; the brain is still developing into the 20s.
- Misusing substances can lead to addiction or a substance use disorder.
- Naloxone is a potentially life-saving medication that can stop or reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.
- Good Samaritan Laws protect people who call 911 to get help for a friend, even if they have also been misusing substances.

- Seek guidance from a trusted adult if you have questions or need help. "Human Resources" can include parents, teachers, doctors, coaches, etc.

Extension Ideas:

- Create a PSA sharing how you can face peer pressure and say no.
- Create a tip sheet for navigating peer pressure for younger students.
- Make a Tik Tok video about how to make healthier choices.
- Create a Paper Slide Show and video tape your message to go along with the picture slides.
- Have students create a small skit to help educate others. They can act their skits out or record and place them in an online forum.
- Have students research some of the best ways to help a person who is misusing substances
- Prevention is lifelong. We encourage you to start and continue these health conversations with your teens to help them learn about alcohol and other substance misuse from a health perspective.

Share What You Know

Share what do you know about medicines in the box below. Answer the question:

What are medicines?

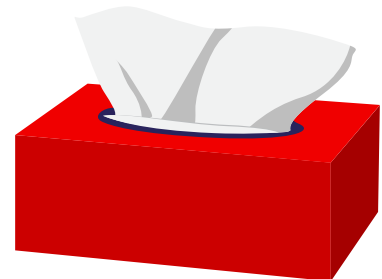
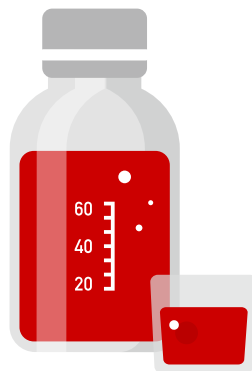
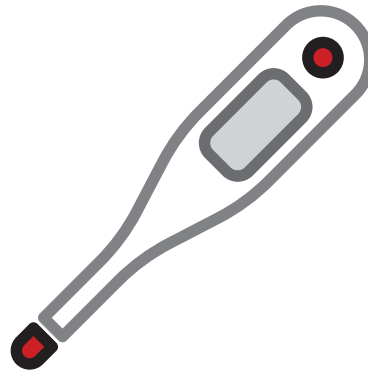
Share when you should use medicine. Answer the question:

Who are the trusted adults in your life?

When you are sick

Some substances and medications are used to help us when we are feeling ill. They are called prescription drugs. They can be purchased from a pharmacy, and it is okay to take them if they come from a trusted adult like a parent.

Circle items that you have used when you have been sick:



Six-Word Story

Medication Safety Video

Summarize what you learned in six words and draw an illustration of this big idea!

Making the Right Choice

Read each situation below. Then, circle the answer(s) that you feel would be the healthy choice.

A friend on the playground gives you something that looks like candy and tells you that you can eat it.

Should you...

Eat it.

OR

Say no and tell a trusted adult.

You found a bottle of medicine on the bathroom counter.

Should you...

Leave it alone and go about your day.

OR

Not touch it and let an adult know that it was left on the counter.

Your young cousin is pulling their mom's phone from her purse and a pill bottle falls out.

Should you...

Help distract your cousin by giving them something else to play with.

OR

Give the pill bottle to a trusted adult.

When you are at a friend's house you see their older sibling taking medicine and they are not sick.

Should you...

Continue to play and say nothing.

OR

Let a trusted adult know what you witnessed.

Staying Well and Being Responsible with Medicine

Word Bank:

dangerous

safe

directions

adult's

drugs

children

ill

Do not take medicine without an _____ permission and assistance.

Make sure that the _____ on the medication are read and followed.

Watch out for younger _____ when medication is within reach. Let an adult know that they are within reach.

Know who you can talk to about medication, drugs, or alcohol. These trusted adults are people who will keep you _____.

Drugs that are either prescribed or over the counter can be very _____ if used the wrong way.

Medication Matching Page 1

Cut out the squares below and paste in the appropriate box on the following page.

Help Fight Disease and Infection	By Mouth	Asthma Inhaler	Tylenol or Advil
Replace or Block Chemicals in the Body	With an Inhaler	Antibiotics for an illness	Sunscreen
Control an Illness	Through a Patch	Medication Given After Surgery or Severe Injury	Vitamins
Relieve Pain	Rubbed into the Skin	Insulin for Diabetes	Benadryl
Relieve Symptoms	Through a Needle (Getting a shot)	Prescription for a Chronic Condition	Neosporin

Paste the squares in the appropriate box.

Medications are used safely to:	Medications can enter the body in the following ways:
Medication given by the doctor is a prescription:	Some medication can be purchased without a prescription:

Z Chart - Medication Safety

As you watch the CVS Dose of Knowledge Medication Safety Video, add ideas to your Z Chart. Each time the video is paused, record at least one key idea on the left-hand side of the Z. Add or correct information during a repeat viewing. Use your ideas to create a sentence that identifies the main idea of the video. Create a visual or graphic of the main idea on the right-hand side of the Z.

Topic: Medication Safety Main Idea: _____

List Key Ideas Below

Draw Picture Above

Use these Discussion Cards to have conversations with your young adults.

<p>What would you say to a friend who offered you alcohol or any other substance?</p>	<p>What are your beliefs about drugs and drug laws?</p>
<p>If someone you care about doesn't respect your opinion or choice, what can you do?</p>	<p>What do you know about opioids, fentanyl, nicotine, and marijuana?</p>
<p>What other situations are you worried about encountering?</p>	<p>What is the role of a good friend in supporting friends in saying "no" to substances?</p>

Use these Discussion Cards to have conversations with your young adults.

How can you be responsible with medications?

Why is the information on prescription bottles important?

Name 5 adults you trust, and why it is important to talk to them.

Why might a drug affect everyone differently?

How would you say “no” when offered pills at a friend's home, school, or a party?

How can you talk to your friends about responsible medication use?

<p>Observations: Watch the CVS Dose of Knowledge: Peer Pressure video, pausing frequently to record your observations below. Watch the video a second time without pausing and put a star next to the five most important things to understand from the video.</p>	<p>Compare your list of top five key ideas and record below.</p>
	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
<p>Summary: Use your list of key ideas to create a one- to two-sentence summary.</p>	<p>Main Idea: Use your summary to create a word or phrase that identifies the main idea.</p>

Use these Discussion Cards to have conversations with your young adults.

<p>Have you been in situations where there were opportunities for drug or alcohol use? Did you feel pressured? Why or why not?</p>	<p>What adventures can you have that keep you and your friends safe?</p>
<p>Imagine that it's 25 years from now and you have a teenage son or daughter exactly the same age as you are now. What would you say to them about drinking and drugs?</p>	<p>Have you ever witnessed anyone using alcohol or drugs make decisions that could negatively impact their health? What happened? How would you feel if it were you?</p>
<p>Why is it important to know exactly what you are putting into your system and your body?</p>	<p>When you feel down, stressed, lonely or bored, what do you do to feel better? Sometimes people "medicate" with drugs or alcohol to avoid difficult feelings. What are some healthier options?</p>

Use these Discussion Cards to have conversations with your young adults.

Name two things you would like to accomplish by the time you graduate high school. How could drugs and alcohol get in the way of those goals?

Why do you think some teens misuse drugs and alcohol?

When do you think people are old enough to make their own decisions about drinking and drugs?
Do grown-ups always make good decisions?

What goals do you have for yourself after high school, and how can you be sure to achieve them?