

HaileyburyTurnford

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Dear Parent/Carer

Drugs and Alcohol Information for Parents and Carers

The importance of drug education

Whilst drug and alcohol education is an important part of the school curriculum, to be really effective children need to learn at home too. This newsletter provides some key facts and tips for talking about this sensitive subject and details of where to go to for more information and support.

How should I talk to my child?

You don't need to be a drugs expert to help your child to make healthy choices. Starting early and encouraging conversations makes it more likely that your child will come to you if there is a problem.

Do start the conversation early so that children learn to speak openly

Don't save things up and have one 'big talk'

Do take the opportunity to have everyday conversations. Use social media, news, TV etc. as a prompt

Don't use threats or scare tactics; evidence suggests this doesn't work

Don't present your opinions as facts. If you don't know say so

Do set clear rules and boundaries. Your child should know your expectations

Do take the opportunity to learn together, starting with the websites suggested on this info sheet.

What else can I do?

Young people take drugs or drink for different reasons including curiosity, boredom and wanting to fit in as well as to gain any perceived benefits. Research shows that parents can help to reduce risks by providing a positive role model at home and reinforcing the fact that not all young people try drugs.

Make sure you know the basic facts about drugs and alcohol and where to go to for support in Hertfordshire.

- Keep talking
- Get to know your child's friends and their parents
- Encourage out of school hobbies, clubs and activities
- Encourage independence and a personal sense of responsibility
- Explain expectations and consequences of behaviour
- Offer praise and reassurance
- Let them know they have your trust and support



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What are the risks?

All drugs carry risks. In young people, who are not yet fully grown the effects can be unpredictable and dangerous. The human brain begins to develop in the womb but is not fully formed until well into adulthood and early drug use can impact on growth and development.

As well as the risks to physical and mental health, intoxication increases the risks of arguments, accidents and fights. Teenagers, are more likely to engage in unprotected sex, which can lead to early pregnancy and the risk of sexually transmitted infections. Any of these potential risks increase with more frequent drug use, mixing alcohol with drugs and by using a higher strength of drug.

In addition to this the consequences of being caught and charged with drug offences could be a criminal record or a custodial sentence which can impact negatively on future life choices.

What should I look for?

- Loss of interest in sport of favourite activities
- Lack of interest in personal appearance or personal hygiene
- Dramatic mood swings, excessive tiredness, lethargy, changes in appetite
- Sudden changes in established friendship groups
- Dilated pupils, red eyes and bad skin
- Spending, stealing or borrowing money coupled with a refusal to explain how or why

What should I do if I think my child is using drugs?

Don't panic. If you think or you know that your child has been using drugs it's natural to feel worried or angry, but losing your temper or making hasty decisions is unlikely to help. Try to remain calm and listen. Offer support. Don't challenge your child if you think they are drunk or have been using drugs, this is only likely to make things worse. Make sure they are safe of immediate danger and wait until later to talk things through. Get help. If it's a medical emergency call 999.

Where can I get help?

Talk in confidence to your GP or professional from AFDASH (Adolescent and Family Drug and Advisory Service in Herts).

AFDASH@hpft.nhs.uk

Call 01992 531971

Al Anon Confidential helpline on 020 7403 088

Talk to Frank www.talktofrank.com

Family Lives Confidential helpline on 0808 800 2222

You are also encouraged to seek support from your child's Year Achievement Coordinator or a member of staff your child can trust to discuss any concerns or issues at school.

If you require any further details, please do not hesitate to contact me at goodesm@haileyburyturnford.com

Yours faithfully

Mrs M Goodes

Vice Principal

