

THE TIME BETWEEN HOPING EVERYTHING IS OK & KNOWING IT IS.



The teen years are a time of rapid growth, exploration, and risk taking. Taking risks provides young people the opportunity to test their skills and abilities and discover who they are. But, some risks—such as underage drinking—can have harmful and long-lasting effects on a teen’s health and well-being.

Parents are a powerful influence in the lives of their teens. When parents make a habit of knowing about their teens—what they are doing, who they are with, and where they are and setting clear expectations for behavior with regular check-ins to be sure these expectations are being met—they can reduce their teens’ risks for injury and alcohol use. These parents are monitoring their teens’ activities and behavior

What is parental monitoring?

Parental monitoring includes 1) The expectations parents have for their teen’s behavior; 2) the actions parents take to keep track of their teen; and 3) the ways parents respond when their teen breaks the rules.

You are using parental monitoring when you ask your teen

- Where will you be?
- Whom will you be with?
- When will you be home?

You are also monitoring when you

- Check in with your teen by phone.
- Get to know his or her friends and their parents.
- Talk with your teen about how he or she spends time or whether he or she is making safe choices.
- Set and enforce rules for your teen’s behavior by clearly explaining the rules and consequences and following through with appropriate consequences when the rules are broken.

Does parental monitoring make a difference?

Yes. Research shows that teens whose parents use effective monitoring practices are less likely to make poor decisions, such as smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, being physically aggressive, or skipping school.²⁻⁶ Clear communication about your expectations is especially important. Research shows that teens who believe their parents disapprove of risky behaviors are less likely to choose those behaviors.¹

How can busy parents monitor their teens?

As a parent, you face many competing demands on your time. Work or other activities can keep you away from home and limit monitoring of your teen. To help bridge this gap, you can use e-mails, text messages, and phone calls to check in with your teen. You can also seek the support of other family members, friends, and school staff to help monitor your teen’s activities and behavior. Teens who have a variety of adults supervising and monitoring their activities may be even less likely to engage in unhealthy and unsafe behaviors.



You can promote a caring relationship with your teen by listening, asking questions, asking for opinions, offering support and praise, and staying involved in your teen’s life.

Resources

Where can parents get more information?

- **DC Parent Portal—Raising Healthy Teens** www.cdc.gov/parents/teens/healthy_children.html
- **KidsHealth** <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/positive/>
- **Partnership for Drug-Free Kids** <https://drugfree.org/>

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