

A Parent's Guide to Teen Parties

Parties are an important part of a teen's social life. But an unsupervised or poorly planned party can result in unwanted or even tragic consequences. Here are tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics about how parents and caregivers can help keep teens safe at parties.

Facts About Teen Parties

- When a teen plans a party, news spreads very quickly via social media, and teen parties can grow too large for parents to control.
- Teen parties often start late at night and move from house to house.

Facts About Alcohol and Drugs

- Teens often expect alcohol and marijuana at parties. Some parents believe that it is better to allow teens to drink in their home so they can keep them safe. While this idea may be well-intentioned, it is simply misguided. Parents cannot keep impaired teens safe.
- Alcohol and other drugs impair judgment. Teens are more likely to have sex, be involved in a violent incident, or be injured after using drugs or alcohol. All too frequently, teens die as a result of violence, unintentional injuries, or overdoses related to alcohol and other drugs.
- Alcohol affects teens differently than adults. For example, compared with adults, teens are more likely to remain awake, to wander about, or to drive a car while having a much greater degree of mental impairment.

What Parents Need to Know

Communication and honesty are important to keep your teen safe. Teens whose parents talk with them regularly about drugs and alcohol are less likely to use substances than those whose parents don't. Tell your teens that you expect them not to use alcohol or other drugs at parties.

Parent networking is the best prevention tool to combat underage drinking. Get to know your teen's friends and their parents. If your teen is planning on going to a party, call the parents to ensure that they will be home and that they will not allow drugs or alcohol. If this is not possible, don't let your teen go.

Parents are legally responsible for anything that happens to a minor who has been served alcohol or other drugs in their home. If anyone brings alcohol or other drugs to your home, be prepared to contact their parents. And if someone comes to your home already intoxicated, make sure they get home safely. Help your teen feel responsible for this as well. Parents may be criminally or civilly liable if

- Alcohol is provided to a minor at a party they have organized.
- Someone's property is damaged.
- Someone is injured.
- Someone leaves and gets into a car crash and/or injures someone else.
- Someone dies.

If you are hosting a teen party . . .

- Understand the local laws about alcohol and other drugs. Laws about alcohol and drug use vary from state to state, so make sure you know what the laws are in your state.

- Plan in advance. Go over party plans with your teen. Encourage your teen to plan non-alcohol–related group activities or games.
- Keep parties small. There should be 10 to 15 teens for each adult. Make sure at least one adult is always present. Ask other parents to come over to help you if you need help.
- Set a guest list. The party should be for invited guests only. No “crashers” allowed. This will help avoid the “open party” situation.
- Set a start and end time for the party. Check local curfew laws to determine an end time.
- Set party “rules” and your expectations. Discuss them with your teen before the party. Rules should include the following:
 - No tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs.
 - No one can leave the party and then return.
 - Lights are always left on.
 - Certain rooms of the house are off-limits.
- Have plenty of food and nonalcoholic beverages available. Also, put your alcohol and any prescription or over-the-counter medicines into a locked cabinet.
- Pick out a spot where you can see what is going on without being in the way. You can also help serve snacks and beverages.

If your teen is going to a party . . .

- Know where your teen is going and how long they will be there.
- Ask your teen to call you if the location of the party changes. Be sure to let your teen know where you will be during the party.
- Call the parent of the party host to make sure a parent will be home the entire time and supervising the party. Make sure that tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs will not be allowed.
- Talk with your teen beforehand about how to handle a situation where alcohol or other drugs are available at a party.
- Make sure your teen has a way to get to and from the party. Make it easy for your teen to leave a party by making it clear that they can call at any time for a ride home. Discuss why they might need to call you. Remind your teen to *never* ride in a car with a driver who has been drinking or using other drugs.
- Be up to greet your teen when they come home. This can be a good way to check the time and talk about the evening.
- If your teen is staying overnight at a friend’s house after the party, verify this arrangement with the friend’s parents and that they will be home.

Visit www.HealthyChildren.org for more information.

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