

# Conversations matter

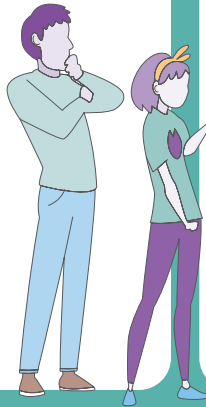
*Things you should know when talking to youth about substance use*



Having regular conversations about substance use with young people in your life—ideally before they reach adolescence—can be very helpful. But talking to youth about substance use can be challenging. Here are some tips to help you start the conversation.

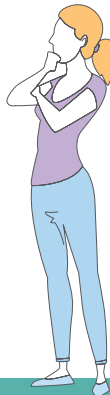
## Be curious

Try to approach the conversation with a sense of curiosity and interest, rather than accusation and fear. Some experimentation is normal for young people, and there are ways to support them so they can make informed decisions for themselves.



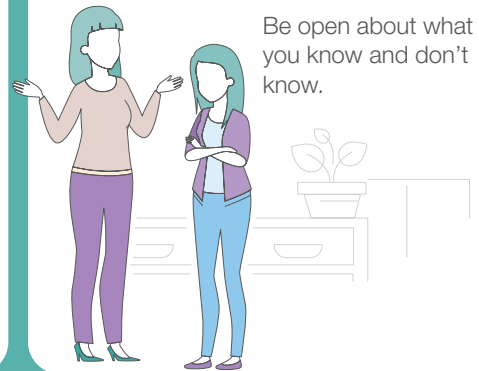
## Listen to what they are saying

Ask the young person in your life what their concerns are about alcohol and other drugs. Discuss and address those issues. Let them know they can be open and honest with you, and that you have their safety in mind.



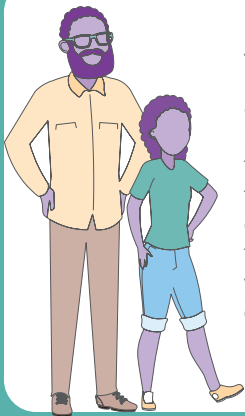
## Be honest

Be open about what you know and don't know.



## Believe in them

Show that you have confidence in the young person to make their own decisions, and let them know when you are proud of their choices.



## Be aware of the message you are sending

As a support in a young person's life, your own use of alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs may send mixed messages. Try to model responsible choices for young people.



## Be informed

Before talking to a young person about a particular drug, learn more about the topic so you are well informed.



Many young people experiment with substance use as part of growing up, but most youth don't develop problems or become addicted. Taking the first step and having an open and respectful conversation can make a difference in a young person's life.

If you need more help, discuss the situation with your family physician or a public health nurse. Talk to a parent support group or professional counsellor at a family services association in your community.

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For more information about substance use, visit:  
[www.camh.ca/talking-about-and-spotting-substance-abuse](http://www.camh.ca/talking-about-and-spotting-substance-abuse)

Part of the series *Things You Should Know About Mental Health*—developed in collaboration with youth

For more information, please see the resources section of the Game Changers website:  
[www.camh.ca/GCResources](http://www.camh.ca/GCResources)