# Children and young people

# How to talk to children and young people about alcohol

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## Families have a vital role to play in ensuring children have healthy attitudes to alcohol

## Talking with young people about alcohol

Children's behaviour is largely influenced by their family - and that includes decisions made around alcohol.

The Australian Alcohol Guidelines advise that children and people under 18 years of age should not drink alcohol. There is no safe level of alcohol use for anyone under the age of 18.

That's why it is so important that parents, grandparents and other carers do not provide alcohol to children and young people – and set time aside to speak with them about how to minimise the harms from alcohol.

It is important to note that young people increasingly do not want to drink alcohol. More than [twice the number of 14-17 year-old Australians abstained from alcohol in 2019 (73%) compared to 2001 (32%)](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/alcohol-tobacco-and-other-drugs).

## Why children should be aware of alcohol risks

Children and young people under 18 are at higher risk of harm from alcohol than adults because their brains and bodies are still developing, and won't finish developing until they reach their mid-twenties.

When young people drink alcohol, it can affect their mental health and is more likely to result in dangerous behaviour, accidents, and injuries. It has also been shown that early alcohol use is [linked to a higher likelihood of problems with alcohol later in life.](https://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/ndarc/resources/NDA073%20Fact%20Sheet%20Alcohol%20and%20Young%20People_0.pdf)

This is why parents must stick to the Australian Alcohol Guidelines, and not provide alcohol to children and young people under 18.

[Learn about the Australian Alcohol Guidelines](https://fare.org.au/resources/reducing-your-risk/australian-alcohol-guidelines/)

## How to have a conversation with a child about alcohol

* Talk with them early on, so you are both prepared for when they start to socialise outside the home, where they may experience peer pressure to drink alcohol or take part in high-risk behaviour.
* Share information about the effects and risks of alcohol use, particularly around how it can affect your health and in particular, alcohol's impacts on young people.
* Set and negotiate expectations. Be specific in telling them not to drink any alcohol, and negotiate rules for how your family will manage events like parties or sleepovers.
* Be aware of the influence of friends and peers. Talk with your child or young person in your care about pressure they may experience and how to respond.
* Be open, honest, and listen to their thoughts. Let them know they can talk to you whenever they have questions.
* You don’t have to be an expert, but it’s good to be prepared and ready with what you want to say and how, before you talk with your child or young person.

There is information and support available to help facilitate these honest conversations around alcohol. Check out the following resources:

[Supporting Family Conversations](https://supportingfamilyconversations.com.au/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) [Positive Choices](https://positivechoices.org.au/) [Talk about it](https://adf.org.au/talking-about-drugs/parenting-talk/)

### Paige shares her family story

Just after her 30th birthday, Paige was faced with what would become a turning point for her family – speaking with her partner about his alcohol consumption.

An acquaintance reached out to speak with Paige about her partner’s drinking, and after reading through advice online she was able to have the conversation with her partner, set new boundaries, and help him seek support.

Watch Paige’s story about how her family tackled alcohol.

Watch Paige’s story

More information

## Related information



## Need advice or support?

To find a local GP, you can call 1800 022 222 or visit [healthdirect.gov.au](http://healthdirect.gov.au). To find a local psychologist, visit [psychology.org.au/find-a-psychologist](http://psychology.org.au/find-a-psychologist). If you need other support to reduce your drinking, you can contact the National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline on 1800 250 015.

## Join our community

Will you join the community taking action on alcohol?