

Chapter**11****Parent Letter and Activities**

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your teen's health class is currently learning about alcohol and drugs. We will begin by discussing medicines—how they can help the body and how to use them safely. We will then discuss the effects of alcohol use and abuse on the body. Our next topic will be other drugs and how their abuse can affect health. Specifically, students will learn to recognize the risks that alcohol and drug use pose to physical, mental/emotional, and social health. We will conclude our study of alcohol and drugs with a detailed examination of the risks of substance abuse and ways to help those who are addicted.

Some questions your teen will answer as we study these topics are: *What is the proper use of medicines? How can I avoid misusing medicines? How does alcohol affect the body? What is alcoholism, and what can be done about it? What is drug abuse? How do different drugs affect the body? What are the parts of the nervous system? How does the nervous system work? How can I keep my nervous system healthy? How do alcohol and drug use pose risks to physical, mental/emotional, and social health? What are some reasons to avoid substance use? What alternatives are there to using alcohol and drugs? What are some ways to say no to alcohol and drugs?*

Even though it is illegal in the United States for people under the age of 21 to drink alcohol, the American Academy of Pediatrics says that the average age for taking a first drink is 11 for boys and 13 for girls. They go on to say that young people who drink are 7.5 times more likely to use other illegal drugs. Given statistics such as these, making teens aware of the risks of drugs and alcohol should be a top priority.

To support and extend our classroom work, please set aside some time during the next few weeks to complete one or more of the following activities with your teen:

- Make yourself available to answer questions and discuss concerns your teen may have about the use of alcohol and drugs.
- To help your teen say no effectively, role-play a situation in which one of you is trying to talk the other out of using drugs or alcohol. Then switch roles.
- Encourage your teen to share with you what she or he has learned about alcohol's effect on coordination.

Any other activities that you believe will help your teen develop a greater understanding of the risks involved in substance abuse are, of course, a welcome addition to our work here. Armed with such knowledge, your teen is far less likely to become involved with drugs or alcohol. Thank you for supporting our classroom work. As always, do not hesitate to contact me for further information.

Sincerely,

Health Teacher