



A PARENTS GUIDE

ABOUT INTOXICANTS

WHY

As a parent, why do you need to know about young people and intoxicants?

As a parent, you have a crucial role in how your child uses intoxicants.

When your child enters youth, it is even more important that you show interest and have an opinion towards intoxicants. This way, you help ensure your child's health, wellbeing, and development.

Your child's transition into youth is a time of new experiences and challenges. It is a time where your child develops its independence and identity both personally and in being around others.

Community is an important and natural part of youth. That is why it is important that your child spends time and enjoys time with friends. Meanwhile, it is important that you protect him/her against the negative consequences that are associated with using intoxicants, among other things.

This pamphlet contains information, facts and guidelines that can help you create healthy boundaries for your child in relation to alcohol, drugs, and smoking.

You can read the pamphlet in its entirety or you can look up certain pages that are relevant to you and your teenager.

Intoxicants is a collective description for drugs you can use to change, slow down or stimulate your mental state.

Legal intoxicants can be tobacco, alcohol, caffeine (coffee, coke) etc.

Illegal intoxicants are for instance, hash, heroin, and cocaine.

The effect of intoxicants is bigger on a young brain, but how?

The young brain is completely developed at around the age of 25. Therefore, using intoxicants can be dangerous to brain cells.

Young brains react stronger to intoxicants, which means it is easier for young people to lose control. Meanwhile, learning new things can be a problem.



What may be decisive to whether and when your child has its debut with intoxicants?

- Your attitude to intoxicants
- The child's attitude to intoxicants
- How easy it is to get intoxicants
- Whether the intoxicants are legal or illegal
- The child's vulnerability (for instance stress or negative events)
- The child's resilience (for instance that the child stands up for its own beliefs and can say no)
- High level of impulsivity. Young people with high impulsivity are at greater risk of using intoxicants
- The transition from school to secondary education

SIGNS OF HIGH IMPULSIVITY

- Tendency to seek out sensations
- Tendency to rash reactions when being in a strong state of emotions, for instance when being angry or enthusiastic
- Having trouble finishing things because they are boring or difficult

IMPULSIVENESS



It is important to have a dialogue with young people who are highly impulsive. Talk about what it means to them to be impulsive and what may be useful for them to pay attention to.

DIALOGUE AND AGREEMENTS

It is important to have an open dialogue with your child about circumstances

- Take initiative, listen and be curious.
- Know that your beliefs about alcohol, smoking and drugs etc. affect the child from an early age – and not just in their teens.
- Be explicit about your agreements and what is expected of your child
- Make it clear to your child that you are always ready to help and step in if problems occur with intoxicants, for instance at a party etc.
- Talk to your child about his or her future and the transition to secondary education. The shift from primary school to secondary education can be paved with many uncertainties, such as new circles of friends, the child's expectations towards the education, party culture and new relationships.
- Talk to your child about how to say no when they do not want to participate in something (see the box: Good Advice)
- Collaborate with the school and the other parents to ensure clear guidelines for intoxicants and parties. Class- and parent's agreements can help provide security for both parents and young people.
- Parent collaboration helps reduce majority misunderstandings among children and parents.

MAJORITY MISUNDERSTANDINGS

- Majority misunderstandings occur when you think most people do a certain thing when in fact it is only a few.
- Majority misunderstandings often help determine children and young people's behavior.
- For instance, when you think that it is normal to get drunk every weekend, then you are more inclined to do so.
- That is why it is important for you and your child to be investigative about what is fact and what is majority misunderstandings.

GOOD ADVICE

It can be difficult to know how to support your child in saying no to intoxicants. Here are some pieces of advice you can use when talking to your child.

1 PAY ATTENTION

Talk to your child and let him/her know that it is okay to stop and pay attention: Which emotions does he/she feel? If they feel insecure, nervous, afraid, or under pressure, they must listen to themselves. This could be a sign that they need to say no.

2 BE CLEAR

Your friends do not always know how you feel. So, you must tell them. But first, you may want to tell yourself: "This is my decision and I expect others to respect it." Then, clearly say no. Often you just need to say: "No, I do not want to." It is important to be honest and not make excuses.

3 IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO SAY NO

Young people who are resilient make their own choices, but even a resilient young person can have a hard time saying no. In a given situation, it may be difficult to feel what is "right" for oneself and one's life. Therefore, we sometimes go along with something we do not want. But it is never too late to say no. Explain your child that we can always say no – even after something has happened: "I actually didn't like that. I won't do that again!"



Figure 1. Three decisive elements concerning use of intoxicants.

FROM CONSUMPTION TO ABUSE

As a parent, you must be aware of your child’s risk consumption of intoxicants. Risk consumption is when the consumption begins to cause problems. For instance, when the consumption of alcohol or drugs during the weekends affect the ability to concentrate and learn.

The transition from risk consumption to abuse is fluid and it is often difficult to decide if the young person’s use of intoxicants has developed into an abuse.

Abuse can be recognized if the young person changes his/her characteristics and for instance has a hard time attending school. Also, abuse leads to health and psychological problems. We are dealing with an abuse when the consumption begins to have consequences for everyday life and creates problems.

The surroundings may experience it as a problem before the young person can/will acknowledge the problem. That is why it is important to seek help and guidance.

LEGISLATIONS SURROUNDING INTOXICANTS

§ What does the state about alcohol?

- It is illegal to sell alcohol to people under the age of 16.
- It is illegal to sell strong types of alcohol with 16,5 % or more to people under the age of 18.

§ What does the law state about hash and other types of drugs (drugs legislation)?

- It is illegal to introduce, perform, sell, buy, deliver, receive, manufacture, process and possess drugs.

§ What does the law state about tobacco, snus, and e-cigarettes?

- It is illegal to sell tobacco to people under the age of 18.
- It is illegal to sell snus – regardless of the purchaser’s age.
- It is illegal to sell e-cigarettes with or t nicotine to people under the age of 18.

ALCOHOL

Several studies show that the use of alcohol among young people is decreasing in Denmark. Yet, young people in Denmark are still in the lead when it comes to getting drunk compared to young people in other European countries. Young people's extensive consumption of alcohol is a phenomenon with strong roots in Danish alcohol culture.

High alcohol consumption has health, personal and economic consequences. Therefore, it is important with an early preemptive effort, because young people's habits concerning alcohol is significant for their future alcohol habits. Teenagers with a high consumption of alcohol is at greater risk of drinking more as an adult than others.

Children of parents who think it is OK for children to drink, drink 10 times more than children whose parents think it is wrong.

WHAT TO DO AS A PARENT

- + **Set boundaries: Children drink more if their parents let them.**
- + **Make arrangements with your child. Young people who have arrangements with their parents drink less.**
- + **Expect that children under the age of 18 do not drink alcohol.**
- + **Express a firm belief in terms of alcohol consumption for children under the age of 18.**
- + **Teach your child what a unit is.**

- ÷ **Do not provide or buy alcohol for your child. To offer children alcohol at home increases their consumption.**
- ÷ **Be aware of your own alcohol habits.**
- ÷ **Make sure you do not just contribute positive values to alcohol, for instance that it is fun or cool to drink alcohol.**

WHAT IS GOOD TO KNOW when you talk to your child about alcohol?

- Late alcohol debut can reduce the risk of a later extensive and problematic alcohol consumption.
- Young people who do not drink alcohol are less at risk of beginning to smoke or experiment with drugs.
- Alcohol is addictive and the development of the addiction is particularly fast for young people.
- Alcohol is very damaging for the brain and the body when you drink 5 units or more at the same event.
- Alcohol increases the risk of approximately 60 types of diseases including cancer.
- Young people who do not drink alcohol are less exposed to accidents, fights, unwanted or unprotected sex and other negative incidents.
- Alcohol can lead to bad physical, social, and mental wellbeing among other things.

TOBACCO AND NICOTINE

The harmful effects of smoking and tobacco are well-known, but fewer are aware of the various nicotine products and the health risks associated with using them. Examples of nicotine products: nicotine pouches, e-cigarettes (such as puff bars and elf bars), etc.

Nicotine is a toxin that the body absorbs through the lungs, mucous membranes, and the skin. From here, it quickly travels through the blood to the brain and throughout the body. Previously, nicotine was used as a pesticide in agriculture.

Nicotine and tobacco are particularly dangerous for children and young people, as nicotine can harm the developing brain.

The brain is not fully developed until one is 25-30 years old. Until then, the brain is very sensitive to external influences, such as drugs (Sundhedsstyrelsen 2023).

Nicotine and tobacco are highly addictive, and it is difficult to quit once you have started.

WHAT YOU AS A PARENT CAN DO

- + **Expect that your child does not smoke or use other nicotine products.**
- + **Implement a smoke-free/nicotine-free home, as it prevents children and young people from starting to smoke or using other nicotine products.**
- + **Talk about smoking and nicotine with your child.**
- + **Make an agreement with your teenager not to start using nicotine.**
- + **Talk to other parents about how you together can encourage young people to remain nicotine-free.**

- ÷ **Children of smokers are at greater risk of starting to smoke. If you are a smoker, refrain from smoking when your child is present. The same applies to the use of nicotine products.**
- ÷ **Never give or buy cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or other nicotine products for your child.**
- ÷ **Avoid having cigarettes or other nicotine products lying around.**

E-CIGARETTES, FOR EXAMPLE, PUFF BARS /ELF BARS

The Health Authority recommends not using e-cigarettes, as there is currently significant uncertainty about the possible health consequences of their use - especially regarding the long-term consequences. This applies to e-cigarettes both with and without nicotine. Furthermore, e-cigarettes contain liquid with flavorings that enter the lungs. We know very little about the content of the flavorings. But we know that they are not healthy for the respiratory tract.

SMOKELESS TOBACCO FOR EXAMPLE, SNUS AND NICOTINE POUCHES

Smokeless tobacco is highly addictive and increases the risk of developing cardiovascular diseases, as well as the risk of developing oral lesions rises with the use of smokeless tobacco products, which are taken orally.

HOOKAH

The smoke from a hookah contains the same toxins as those found in cigarettes as well as toxins from the combustion of charcoal. The amount of smoke inhaled in one puff from a hookah is approximately equivalent to the amount of smoke from one cigarette. And the amount of smoke that an individual inhales during a hookah session, which lasts about 1 hour, is therefore significant.

GOOD TO KNOW,

When talking to your child about tobacco and nicotine?

- **The use of nicotine**
 - > Can cause permanent damage to the brain
 - > Can reduce concentration ability
 - > Can increase the risk of mental illnesses, such as anxiety and depression
- **Smoking and use of other nicotine products increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases and lung diseases.**
- **An early onset of nicotine products can have a harmful effect on cognitive function, including attention and motivation.**
- **Nicotine intake in childhood and adolescence can have implications for the development of self-control, including the ability to regulate emotions and impulsivity.**
- **The earlier tobacco smoking and nicotine intake start, the greater the risk of later substance abuse and dependence on other drugs.**
- **Stress and nicotine can negatively influence each other and be mutually reinforcing. Under stress, the risk of initiating nicotine use increases, and conversely, nicotine use in children and adolescents increases the risk of later developing heightened stress sensitivity.**



SCAN QR CODE AND WATCH THE FILM
"NICOTINE GUIDE FOR PARENTS"

HASH

Like other intoxicants, hash consumption comes with a lot of risks. Among other things, the drug reduces our attention span, our memory, and our learning abilities. These side effects can have a negative impact on a young person's motivation and school attendance, especially when using the drug regularly which makes the young person duller and more indifferent.

Consumption of alcohol, tobacco and drugs are often connected. Young people who smoke and drink alcohol are about 7 times more prone to try hash and other drugs than young people who do not smoke or drink.

Young people who drink 5 units or more 2-3 times a month more often experiment with hash and other drugs.

WHAT TO DO AS A PARENT

- + **Express a firm belief regarding drugs in general.**
- + **Read the young person's signals and pay attention to changes in behavior.**
- + **Pay attention to physical and mental signs that can relate to use of drugs.**
- + **For instance, red eyes, slurring speech, slow movement, lack of motivation etc.**
- + **Pay attention to shifts in circle of friends.**

MEDICINAL CANNABIS

Hash and medicinal cannabis are two vastly different things even though they come from the same plant. Medicinal cannabis can also be manufactured from artificial substances. The purpose of medicinal cannabis is to relieve illness and is only legal to buy and use with a prescription from the doctor.

OTHER DRUGS

Very few school-age young people experiment with drugs such as cocaine, ecstasy, MDMA etc. It is also important that as a parent you pay attention to the child's behavior and signals.

Tendencies for use of intoxicants among young people are erratic. Some of these tendencies are related to great physical and mental risks. This could be the use of prescribed medicine that is not intended for that person, to mix cough syrup with alcohol, or to inhale nitrous oxide to get intoxicated.

The risk increases when young people mix different kinds of intoxicants. For instance, it will lead to an increased risk of suffering from lack of oxygen and then suffocation if the consumption of gas from gas cartridges happens while also consuming alcohol or other sluggish intoxicants.

The damaging effects of these risk actions are substantial. As such, as a parent you must be curious and enquiring about tendencies in your child's party culture and the social relationships your child is part of.

WHAT IS GOOD TO KNOW, when you talk to your child about hash?

- Hash is an illegal drug.
- When using hash regularly, it can be traced in your body for 4-8 weeks.
- A single consumption of hash can be traced in your body in up to 6 days.
- Hash intoxication often lasts 3-4 hours. But the sluggish effect is not completely gone before 24 hours.
- Hash is addictive. That means you can get addicted to the drug and that the necessary dosage to achieve intoxication increases.
- Hash reduces concentration, memory, learning capabilities and the ability to coordinate movements.
- Hash numbs the emotions, which can affect the development of this part of the brain and cause problems for the overall development of social skills.
- Hash consumption includes an immediate risk of having panic experiences, anxiety, and mental problems for vulnerable young people.
- Just like smoking cigarettes, smoking hash is damaging for the lungs.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICINE

The use of illegal drugs has serious health and social consequences. This can be, for example, painkillers, anti-anxiety medication, sleeping pills, or ADHD medication.

Opioids like Tramadol (Dolol) are pain-relieving medication based on morphine. Opioids can only be purchased legally with a prescription. Tramadol is typically used for chronic pain, such as in the treatment of back pain or after surgery. Opioids are extremely addictive, and one can easily become dependent.

Benzodiazepines are prescribed for anxiety and sleep disorders among other things. The pills have names such as Rohypnol and Stesolid. They are produced both in illegal laboratories and in the pharmaceutical industry. Benzodiazepines affect the same neurotransmitters in the brain as alcohol.

The effect is sedative, and there may be blackouts as well as balance and memory problems. Benzodiazepines are extremely addictive.

WHAT YOU AS A PARENT CAN DO

- + **Expect that your child does not take medicine that is not prescribed to him/her.**
- + **Read your child's signals and be aware of changes in behavior.**
- + **Be aware of physical and mental signs associated with drug abuse, such as lethargy or hyperactivity, withdrawal symptoms, etc., or empty blister packs in your child's room or bag.**
- + **Talk to your child about the consequences of taking medicine without a prescription.**
- + **Store prescription medication so it is not accessible to children and adolescent.**
- + **Talk to your child about buying and selling illegal medication.**

POLYDRUG USE

Opioids and benzodiazepines are often part of a polydrug use, where, for example, alcohol, hashish, cannabis, amphetamine, and cocaine are also included. If one mixes opioids or benzodiazepines with other sedative substances such as alcohol or GHB, a synergistic effect occurs between the substances. This means that the effect becomes more than twice as strong and unpredictable. This can result in fatal poisoning, as the drugs depress the nervous system so much that breathing stops.

DEPENDENCY

The body quickly becomes accustomed to opioids and benzodiazepines. This means that one needs larger and larger amounts of the substance to achieve the same effect. This means that the dose taken by a regular user can be fatal for someone who is not used to the drug.

Long-term use can make it difficult to stop, and withdrawal symptoms such as anxiety, agitation, insomnia or seizures can occur. Therefore, one should not suddenly stop taking these substances, and one should agree on a tapering plan with one's doctor.

GOOD TO KNOW, when talking to your child about medication abuse?

- Prescription drug abuse is extremely addictive, even after a short period of use.
- Prescription medication is used as a recreational drug among young people.
- Medicine (without prescription) is illegally imported into the country and distributed to children and young people in the same way as hashish and other drugs.
- Buying and selling prescription medication is illegal without authorization.
- The medicine can have a long-lasting effect. That is, the lethargy can last for several hours.
- Overuse can be addictive and withdrawal should be done slowly with the help of a doctor.
- You should seek help from your doctor or a drug treatment center if you discover your child is taking illegal drugs.



SCAN QR CODE AND WATCH THE FILM
"THE ADDICTION TRAP"

LÆS MERE



SCAN QR CODE AND READ
"EVERYTHING ABOUT DRUGS"



SCAN QR CODE AND READ
"HASH"



SCAN QR CODE AND READ
"DRUGS - ENCYCLOPEDIA"



SCAN QR CODE AND READ
"OPIOIDS"



SCAN QR CODE AND READ
"ALCOHOL"



SCAN QR CODE AND READ MORE ABOUT
"THE U-18 SUBSTANCE ABUSE TEAM"



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"TOBACCO AND NICOTINE"

HELP AND GUIDANCE

For help and guidance, young people and parents can contact:
Ungekøtøkten - Aarhus Kommune
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Email: ungekontakten@aarhus.dk

