

Part 1

Why Families Matter



FAMILY MATTERS

A Program to Prevent Teen Alcohol and Tobacco Use

Part 1: *Why Families Matter*

Welcome to Part 1 of *FAMILY MATTERS — Why Families Matter*. *FAMILY MATTERS* is a program to help families prevent young teens from drinking alcoholic beverages, like beer, wine, wine coolers, and mixed drinks, and from smoking cigarettes or using smokeless tobacco.

Part 1 introduces *FAMILY MATTERS* and explains why you should do the program. The information and activities are designed to show that families matter a lot when it comes to preventing teen alcohol and tobacco use.

Part 1 Instructions

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| Parents | 1. Read the information for parents about <i>FAMILY MATTERS</i> in the question and answer section, Q & As . Make sure any other adults in your family who help take care of your teenager read this section too. |
| Parents | 2. Do Activity 1: What Do You Know? |
| Parents | 3. Do Activity 2: These Things Happen . You can do this activity right after Activity 1 or at another time. |
| Parents | 4. Do Activity 3: Chip Off the Old Block . This activity involves a short conversation between parents or with another adult family member. So choose a time when you can talk. |
| Parents | 5. Read the RECAP of Part 1. |
| Parents | 6. Do the NEXT STEPS listed at the end of Part 1. |

Part 1: *Why Families Matter*



Answering Your Questions

What is FAMILY MATTERS?

FAMILY MATTERS is a program to help families prevent teen alcohol and tobacco use. It's also to help families whose teens are already using alcohol and tobacco.

FAMILY MATTERS comes in four easy-to-do parts mailed to you at home. Each part has helpful information for parents and practical activities to do with families. The program materials are based on scientific research and are designed to be fun for families.

How much time will FAMILY MATTERS take?

You'll receive one of the four parts of *FAMILY MATTERS* about every two weeks. It'll take 15 minutes or less to read the parent information and some more time to do the suggested activities. We know families are busy, so we designed activities that will fit easily into your schedule. With each activity, we'll tell you how long it should take.

Who will be involved?

FAMILY MATTERS is for all family members — not just parents and younger teens, but older brothers and sisters and any other family members or adults who are frequently with your teenager. At the beginning of each activity, we will suggest who should be involved. Part 1 is just to introduce parents to *FAMILY MATTERS*. Your teenager and other family members will be involved in later parts.

Why does FAMILY MATTERS focus on teen alcohol and tobacco use instead of harder drugs like marijuana?

FAMILY MATTERS focuses on alcohol and tobacco for three important reasons: (1) alcohol and tobacco are the drugs young teens use the most, (2) alcohol and tobacco can be harmful, and (3) alcohol and tobacco can lead to the use of other drugs. Remember, alcohol and tobacco are drugs.

Why should we do FAMILY MATTERS?

Chances are that your teen does not drink alcohol or use tobacco now. Unfortunately, young teens from all types of families — even families like yours — start using alcohol and tobacco. *FAMILY MATTERS* will give you ways to deal with these problems before they exist. Or, if your teen has already experimented with alcohol and tobacco, the program will help keep alcohol and tobacco use from becoming more serious problems.

What if we have questions?

We'll telephone you in about a week to answer your questions. After each part, we'll call you again to talk about the activities and to answer questions. If you have questions now, you can call *FAMILY MATTERS* (1-919-966-7016) at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Activity 1

What Do You Know?

● **WHY:** To introduce some important facts about teen alcohol and tobacco use

■ **WHO:** Parents

▲ **HOW LONG:** 10 minutes

See how many important facts you know about teen alcohol and tobacco use. Circle whether you think each statement is true or false. The answers are on the pages following the last question.

1. **True False** It's possible that my teenager could use alcohol or tobacco.
2. **True False** Teenagers whose parents use tobacco or alcohol are less likely to use tobacco and alcohol than teens whose parents do not use tobacco or alcohol.
3. **True False** Teenagers who use alcohol and tobacco are more likely to use other drugs, such as marijuana or cocaine.
4. **True False** More teens die from cocaine and LSD-related causes than from alcohol.
5. **True False** Most teens don't care how their parents feel about them drinking alcohol or using tobacco.
6. **True False** More teens begin to drink alcohol when they are 12-14 years old than at any other age.

7. **True False** Chewing tobacco and dipping snuff are not addictive to teens.
8. **True False** Most cigarette smoking starts after age 18.
9. **True False** The younger teens are when they try alcohol or tobacco, the more likely they are to have other problems.
10. **True False** Families can help prevent teens from using alcohol and tobacco.

What Do You Know? Answers

- 1. True** It's possible that my teenager could use alcohol or tobacco.

Teens of all types from all kinds of families can become involved with alcohol and tobacco. That includes kids of all races, both boys and girls, kids from poor and wealthy families, and kids living in families with both parents or one parent. Your teenager could too!

- 2. False** Teens whose parents use tobacco or alcohol are less likely to use tobacco and alcohol than teens whose parents do not use tobacco or alcohol.

Teens learn by watching what parents do. If you use smokeless tobacco, smoke cigarettes, or drink alcohol, the chances are greater that your teenager will too.

- 3. True** Teens who use alcohol and tobacco are more likely to use other drugs, such as marijuana or cocaine.

Compared with teens who have not used alcohol or tobacco, teens who use alcohol and tobacco are much more likely to go on to try marijuana and other drugs.

- 4. False** More teens die from cocaine and LSD-related causes than from alcohol.

More teen deaths are related to alcohol use than illicit drugs. Alcohol is an important factor in all four leading causes of death among teens — car crashes, other injuries, murder, and suicide.

- 5. False** Most teens don't care how their parents feel about them drinking alcohol or using tobacco.

How parents feel about alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use is very important to teens, even though teens may act as if they don't care. Even as teenagers get older, family members are the main people they turn to for advice and direction.

6. **True** **More teens begin to drink alcohol when they are 12-14 years old than at any other age.**

Alcohol is often the first drug used by teens. Ages 12-14 are the peak ages for beginning alcohol use.

7. **False** **Chewing tobacco and dipping snuff are not addictive to teens.**

Like cigarettes, chewing tobacco and snuff are addictive to teenagers. Teens have just as much trouble quitting as adults.

8. **False** **Most cigarette smoking starts after age 18.**

Cigarette smoking almost always begins in the middle school years. By high school, many teens already are smoking weekly.

9. **True** **The younger teens are when they try alcohol or tobacco, the more likely they are to have other problems.**

The earlier alcohol or tobacco use begins, the greater the chance that teens will become involved in other problems such as sexual activity, school problems, and other drug use.

10. **True** **Families can help prevent teens from using alcohol and tobacco.**

Families can make a big difference in helping prevent teens from using or abusing alcohol and tobacco. That's why it's good you're doing FAMILY MATTERS!

Part 1: *Why Families Matter*

Activity 2 These Things Happen

- **WHY:** To show some of the harmful consequences of teenage alcohol and tobacco use for both your teenager and your family
- **WHO:** Parents
- ▲ **HOW LONG:** 5 minutes

Teens who drink alcohol or use tobacco leave themselves and their families open to many harmful consequences. These could be problems that happen right away or months and years from now. On the list below, put a check next to problems that might happen to your teen because of alcohol or tobacco use.

- _____ My teen could use other drugs.
- _____ My teen could be in an accident.
- _____ My teen could have problems with relationships.
- _____ My teen could get in trouble with sex.
- _____ My teen could have problems with school work.
- _____ My teen could get into trouble with the law.
- _____ My teen could have emotional problems.
- _____ My teen could experience abnormal growth problems.
- _____ My teen could have serious health problems.

Part 1: *Why Families Matter*

Now, think about some of the harmful consequences to your family if your teen used alcohol or tobacco. Put a check next to problems that might happen to your family because of your teen's alcohol or tobacco use.

- A cigarette might cause our house to burn down.
- Our car might get wrecked if our teen drinks and drives.
- There might be fights in our family because of alcohol and tobacco use.
- We might have to help raise our teenager's child.
- Our teenager might get kicked out of school.
- We might have to go to court for abuse and neglect.
- We might have to pay big doctor and hospital bills.
- It could cost our family a lot of money, heartbreak, and trouble!

These Things Happen Information and Answers

Alcohol and tobacco can cause many problems for teenagers and their families.

Other drug use. Teens who drink alcohol or use tobacco are more likely to use other drugs, especially marijuana. They also are more likely to use other harder drugs, such as cocaine and heroin.

Accidents. Because judgment and coordination can be affected by alcohol, even riding a bike or walking can be more dangerous. Teens are more likely to take on a dare if they've been drinking.

Relationship problems. Teens who are involved with tobacco and alcohol can have more problems in personal relationships. They are more likely to lose friends or have trouble making friends. They may withdraw from family and get into trouble with parents, teachers, and other adults.

Get in trouble with sex. Because judgment is affected by alcohol, teens who drink have a greater chance of becoming sexually active, getting pregnant or fathering a child, and catching sexually transmitted diseases.

Problems with school work. Alcohol and tobacco use are related to memory problems, decreased desire to achieve, sleep problems, and poor concentration — all things that can affect school work. If teens become frustrated from doing poorly in school, they may drop out.

Trouble with the law. Alcohol and tobacco use are related to unexcused school absences, destruction of property, violent behavior, and theft.

Emotional problems. Teens who use alcohol or tobacco can become moody or depressed. If they avoid coping with life problems and challenges by using drugs, they may never learn good coping skills.

Abnormal Growth. Alcohol and tobacco use can slow down the normal development of your teen. Kids who use these drugs are also less likely to be physically active and fit.

Serious health problems. Alcohol and tobacco use cause many health problems. Cigarettes cause heart disease, cancer, and lung problems. Alcohol causes permanent damage to the brain and liver. Smokeless tobacco causes mouth diseases.

Activity 3

Chip Off the Old Block

- **WHY:** To show parents that they have a lot of influence on their teens that can help keep them from using alcohol and tobacco
- **WHO:** Parents and other adult family members
- ▲ **HOW LONG:** 10 minutes

Children take on many of the habits of their parents and other family members — and teens do too. Think about all the things your teenager does, and you'll realize many are like things you do too. You and your teen may like the same foods, walk or talk alike, use the same expressions, or like and dislike some of the same things.

Ask your spouse or another adult family member, such as your teen's grandparent, aunt, or uncle, to name ways that your teen is like you. You might be surprised by all the things you and your teen have in common and by the ways you might influence your teen without even knowing it.

You can influence your teenager about using alcohol and tobacco too! Even as teens get older, they look to parents for guidance. Doing FAMILY MATTERS will help your family keep your teenager from becoming involved with drugs.

RECAP

- Part 1 of *FAMILY MATTERS* was designed to show you that it is possible that your teenager could use alcohol or tobacco, and that could cause some very bad things to happen to your teenager and your family.
- You and other family members can help prevent your teen from using alcohol and tobacco. *FAMILY MATTERS* will show you how.
- You may think or know that your teenager uses alcohol or tobacco. If so, don't overreact! *FAMILY MATTERS* also can help families with kids already using alcohol and tobacco.

NEXT STEPS

1. Think about the family members you would like to involve in *FAMILY MATTERS*.
2. A member of the *FAMILY MATTERS* staff will telephone you in about a week to answer any questions you have.

