

# No time like today to have that talk about alcohol

By NATALIE KOLLROSS, Psy.D.

Drinking alcohol is a serious concern among today's youth. Statistics show that many youth ages 12 to 20 are abusing alcohol. In 2007, the Surgeon General reported that about 10 percent of 12-year-olds had tried a significant amount of alcohol. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that over a third of kids have tried alcohol (more than just a sip) by eighth grade and three-quarters of high school students have tried alcohol by their senior year.

As early as age nine, a child's perception of alcohol can begin to change and become more tolerant or positive. This is why it is so important to talk to your kids about alcohol and its effects as early as possible. These conversations

should begin before they are likely to start drinking.

As parents, we may not always see the signs or we may not believe that our 15-year-old is binge drinking, but it is very possible. The best way to address the issue is to encourage open communication with your child. Don't just throw facts at them or use scare tactics. Ask their opinion and beliefs. Ask about what their friends think. Offer information to help them make an informed decision or encourage them to look up information on their own. Threats don't work and will only serve to shut down communication.

If your child feels that

they will be severely punished for drinking they may never tell you if they do it. That's not to say there shouldn't be consequences, but they should know that if there is ever a problem — say their friends were drinking and planning to drive — they could call you.



Warning signs for alcohol use include drastic changes in mood, increased irritability, masking their breath with mouthwash or gum, showing up late, and missing school or activities. Moreover, if alcohol starts to go missing in the home or your child is found with alcohol, these are sure signs they are drinking and probably more than you realize.

Online, you can find helpful resources at Mothers Against Drunk Driving ([www.madd.org](http://www.madd.org)) and Kids Health ([kidshealth.org](http://kidshealth.org); search for "Kids and alcohol"). The best time to start talking to your child is now!

---

*Dr. Kollross is a psychologist at Psychological Services of Pendleton and mother of two.*



## PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES OF PENDLETON, LLC

***GIVING PARENTS  
BUILDING BLOCKS  
TO SUCCESS.***



*Dr. Natalie  
Kollross,  
Dr. Connie  
Umphred,  
Dr. Stephanie  
Evans,  
Dr. Terry  
Templeman*

**Pendleton  
541-278-2222**

**Insurance and private pay accepted  
[www.pendletonpsych.com](http://www.pendletonpsych.com)**