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# Parents Matter

Havana Area Prevention Team

## How To Prevent Drug & Alcohol Use at Every Age

One of the goals of the Prevention Team is to promote healthy, happy, and responsible lifestyles for area youth and families. One way of reaching this goal is by sharing important prevention information with parents and guardians. As we start a new year, we are going to take the next two months to focus on prevention tips for parents to use. These tips will be specific to certain grade levels.

### Special points of interest:

- Parenting tips for 4th-6th graders
- Check out the you tube link!
- Prevention Team Contact Info

This month's focus is 9 to 12 year olds or, preteens. Preteens are on a quest to figure out their place in the world. When it comes to the way they view that world, they tend to give their friends' opinions a great deal of power while, at the same time, they're starting to question their parents' views and messages. Your advice may be challenged — but it will be heard and will stay with your child much more than he or she will ever admit.

## Tips for Guiding Your Child Through the 4<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> Grades.

Here are 8 tips to help you help your preteen live a healthy, drug-free life:

**1. Make sure your child knows your rules — and that you'll enforce the consequences if rules are broken.** This applies to no-use rules about tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs — as well as bedtimes and homework. Research shows that kids are less likely to use tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs if their parents have established a pattern of setting clear rules and consequences for breaking those rules.

**2. Act out scenes with your child where people offer her drugs.** Kids who don't know what to say or how to get away are more likely to give in to peer pressure. Let her know that she can always use you as an excuse

and say: "No, my mom [or dad, aunt, etc.] would be so mad at me if I smoke a cigarette." Explain why she shouldn't continue friendships with kids who have offered her cigarettes, alcohol or pills.

**3. Tell your child what makes him so special.** Puberty can upend a child's self-esteem. Feelings of insecurity, doubt and pressure may creep in. Offset those feelings with a lot of positive comments about his life and who he is as an individual — and not just when he brings home an A.

**4. Give your children the power to make decisions that go against their peers.** You can reinforce this message through small things such as encouraging your child to pick out the sneakers he likes rather than the pair his four friends have.



## HELPFUL TIP

Give your child the power to make decisions that go against his or her friends.

*Continued on next page*

### REFERENCE

*DrugFree.org/Parent tool-kit*

*US. Department of Health and Human Services Administration, "The Surgeon General's Call To Action to Prevention and Reduce Underage Drinking: A Guide to Action for Families"*

# Havana Area PREVENTION TEAM

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**Promotes comprehensive community-wide prevention efforts.**

**Empowers youth & families to develop and lead healthy lifestyles.**

Havana Area Prevention Team is a non-profit organization that seeks to promote:

- **Healthy, happy, and responsible lifestyles for area youth and families.**
- **Awareness of positive alternatives and support of positive actions and activities for youth and families in and around the Havana area.**

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## 4<sup>th</sup>– 6<sup>th</sup> grade tips *continued*

**5. Base drug and alcohol messages on facts, not fear.**

Kids can't argue with facts but their new need for independence may allow them to get around their fears. Also, kids love to learn facts — both run-of-the-mill and truly odd. For drug and alcohol facts, visit [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org) [Drug Guide](#).

**6. Preteens aren't concerned with future problems that might result from experimentation with tobacco, alcohol or other drugs, but they are concerned about their appearance — sometimes to the point of obsession.** Tell them about the smelly hair and ashtray breath caused by cigarettes. Make sure they know that it would be hard to perform in the school play while high on marijuana.

**7. Get to know your child's friends — and their friends' parents.** Check in by phone or a visit once in a while to make sure they are giving their children the same kinds of messages you give your children about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

**8. Help children separate reality from fantasy.** Watch TV and movies with them and ask lots of questions to reinforce the distinction between the two. Remember to include advertising in your discussions, as those messages are especially powerful.

**Substances in your fourth to sixth grader's world can include:**

Tobacco, Alcohol, Inhalants, Marijuana.

Here's a link to a you tube video of an expert discussing these eight steps.

<http://youtu.be/LOsoMSqh-Yg>

**For more parenting tips please visit  
<http://www.drugfree.org/the-parent-toolkit/>**