EVEN IF YOU KNOW ABOUT DRINKING OR DRUGS

Simple Questions. Straight Answers.
Why is my healthcare provider asking me about alcohol and other drugs?

Asking these questions is part of good health care, just like asking about smoking or exercise. Your honest answers can help you get the best care.
WHAT’S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT ALCOHOL OR DRUGS?

Your body and brain are still growing. Alcohol and drugs can mess up the way your brain develops.

WHAT CAN HAPPEN TO MY BODY?

• Damage to the parts of your brain that control memory, learning, making decisions, and keeping your feelings and desires under control.

• Alcohol can damage all of the organs in your body.

• Alcohol Poisoning: Drinking too much at one time slows down your heart rate and breathing. That could kill you.

• You may need more and more alcohol or drugs to feel high or just okay. This can lead to dependence and addiction.

• With many drugs there’s a chance you may stop breathing and die.

You probably already know that it’s against the law to drink alcohol until you’re 21. You can face penalties if you possess, sell, or buy marijuana for non-medical use in Massachusetts. There are penalties for buying or selling other drugs as well, including prescription drugs.

Sharing prescription drugs or taking more than prescribed to you can cause serious health problems and could lead to an overdose.
Using Drugs or Alcohol as a Teen Risks Damaging Your Brain.

Alcohol and many drugs can damage brain cells. Damaged brain cells could mean:
You find it hard to make decisions.
You have trouble with relationships.
You can't focus at school or work.
You may not get the job you want.
You won't have the life you want.

Can Drinking or Getting High Really Hurt Me?

- Young drivers (ages 16-20) are 17 times more likely to die in a crash when they have a blood alcohol concentration of .08% (or higher) than when they have not been drinking.
- Teens who drink or use other drugs are more likely to have unsafe sex, which could lead to pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- Alcohol and drugs are connected with the leading causes of death among teenagers — accidental injury, homicide, and suicide.
- Alcohol and illegal drugs or someone else's drugs can make it harder to heal after an injury.
EFFECTS OF LONG-TERM DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE

Permanent brain damage
Heart attack, stroke, seizure
Liver damage
Pneumonia, tuberculosis
Ulcers

Other Risks
• Alcohol or drug addiction
• Depression
• Suicide
• HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B or C
• Overdose and death
• Date rape
• Car crashes

Risks for Men
• Impaired sexual performance

Risks for Women
• Breast cancer
MARIJUANA

Marijuana’s impact on the brain over time can lead to lower lifetime achievement in school and work. Smoking marijuana heavily at a young age can cause symptoms of chronic bronchitis. Its use can lead to car crashes, and there is a risk of addiction in long time users.

WHAT LEGAL PROBLEMS COULD I HAVE IF I DRINK OR USE DRUGS?

You could get:

• Arrested when you’re with people who are drinking or using illegal drugs, even if you’re not
• Arrested for holding illegal drugs or alcohol, even if they aren’t yours
• Arrested for driving under the influence (DUI) or for illegal drug possession
• Your driver’s license taken away
• Sent to a youth facility or rehab facility
• A criminal record that could stop you from getting into college, getting a job, or getting housing in the future

It may not seem fair, but these are some of the laws.
Prescription medicine and over-the-counter drugs are legal and tested for safety to treat certain diseases. If you don’t have these problems, these drugs could mess up your digestion or breathing, change your blood pressure, make you feel confused, or even kill you.

YES! Combining alcohol and drugs could be deadly. For example, don’t mix energy drinks with alcohol because they contain the drug caffeine. Caffeine gives you energy, and can make you feel less drunk or high than you really are. That false sense of feeling sober could lead to bad choices like driving a car.

I just use over-the-counter medicines or prescriptions I find in the medicine cabinet at home. Are they safe?
If you have asthma, diabetes, attention deficit disorder (ADD), depression, or some other health issues, alcohol or drugs could make your symptoms worse — and that could mean trouble.

How do I know if alcohol or drugs are becoming a problem?

This may give you some hints. Did you ever:

- Get in trouble or arrested when using alcohol or drugs?
- Drive drunk or high, or ride with someone who was?
- Miss school or work, or have your grades drop?
- Use alcohol or drugs to relax, feel better, or fit in?
- Plan your day around getting and using drugs or alcohol?
- Need to use more and more to get the same feeling?

Talk to a trusted adult or see page 12 about getting some help.

If you spend more and more money on drugs or alcohol, that’s a problem. If someone tells you they’re concerned about your use, you may want to check it out.
WHAT IS ALCOHOL OR DRUG ADDICTION?

The more you use alcohol or drugs the more your brain can change. Addiction makes you crave drugs or alcohol just so you can feel normal. Alcohol or drugs become more important than anything else — more important than the people you care about, your safety, or your future. Then it's very hard to stop using without help.

People who start using alcohol or other drugs when they are young are much more likely to become addicted and have lifelong problems.

AREN'T I TOO YOUNG TO GET ADDICTED?

- No one is too young or too old to get addicted.
- It's easier for teens to get addicted because the part of the brain that helps make good decisions, like not drinking or using drugs, is still developing.
- You can't cure addiction, but you can manage it. It's never too late to find out how and get your life back.

If you think you need help, check out the resources on page 12. The sooner you get help, the better.
Yes! Women’s bodies have stronger reactions to alcohol and other drugs.

Alcohol and drugs get into women’s bodies faster, so they get high or drunk faster.

• Women who have 1 or 2 drinks a day increase their risk of breast cancer.
• Young women have the added risk of getting pregnant if they have unsafe sex while they are drunk or high.
• If a woman is pregnant and uses drugs or alcohol, she risks her health and the health of her baby.

Women get addicted faster and die sooner than men from alcohol or drugs.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF ALCOHOL OR DRUG WITHDRAWAL?

Call your doctor if you have any of these signs when you stop drinking or using.
• Severe stomach cramps
• Diarrhea and vomiting
• Seizures
• Sleeplessness
• Racing thoughts
• Fast-beating heart
• Anxiety
• Full body shakes
• Terrible cravings for alcohol or the drug you are quitting

If you have been using a substance heavily for a long time, you can talk to your doctor about how to quit in a way that is safe for your body. People in recovery say they feel healthier and feel like they got their lives back.
Most likely, your parents will be glad that you want to get help for your issues with alcohol or drugs. Try talking to them.

If you need to talk to someone else, try:
• Your doctor or health care provider
• Your school counselor or school nurse
• A substance use counselor
• Your local youth worker
• Other trusted adults, like your priest, rabbi, imam or minister. They can help you and support your decision not to use drugs or alcohol.

These people can help with a friend’s problem, too.

Need help? Call the Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information and Education Helpline at 1-800-327-5050 (TTY: Use MassRelay at 711 or 1-800-439-2370) or visit www.helpline-online.com.
ALCOHOL OR DRUGS ARE EVERYWHERE. HOW CAN I AVOID THEM?

Be creative. Think about ways to make good choices before you have to. Practice ways to say, “No thanks.” Make sure that you have ways of getting away from risky situations, like calling a person you trust. Continue with your healthy activities, like music or sports. Hang out with friends who don’t use alcohol or drugs. Check your local paper or town website for other ideas about what services and activities are near you.
Sometimes it is hard to make healthy choices if your parents are using substances in unhealthy ways. Try talking with your doctor, counselor, or other trusted adults about ways to deal with this. Check the resources in this brochure for more help.

Alateen helps young people recover from the effects of living with family members or friends who have alcohol problems. Call Al-Anon Family Groups of Massachusetts and ask about Alateen at 1-508-366-0556 or visit www.ma-al-anon-alateen.org.
Yes! Here are some sites you can visit and numbers you can call.

What if I want to get some help or find help for a friend?
There are special adolescent services for young men and young women, as well as Recovery High Schools for students who got treatment and want to stay sober. For more information about these services, contact:

**Youth Central Intake and Care Coordination (YCICC)**
1-617-661-3991 or toll-free 1-866-705-2807
TTY: 1-617-661-9051
www.healthrecovery.org

**Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information and Education Helpline**
Free and confidential information and referrals for alcohol and other drug problems and related concerns. Help is available 7 days a week in many languages for people of all ages.

1-800-327-5050
TTY: Use MassRelay at 711 or 1-800-439-2370
www.helpline-online.com

**Massachusetts Bureau of Substance Abuse Services**
For substance use and gambling prevention and treatment services in the Commonwealth.
ww.mass.gov/dph/bsas

**Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse**
Order or download free materials for all sorts of health issues, including alcohol and other drugs.
www.mass.gov/maclearinghouse

**CDC — Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
Alcohol and Public Health — Health information and data on alcohol use.
www.cdc.gov/alcohol

**CDC Injury Prevention & Control**
Health information and data on prescription drug overdose.
www.cdc.gov/injury
National Institute on Drug Addiction (NIDA)
Information, materials, and links about drugs for researchers, parents, health professionals, and students.
www.drugabuse.gov

Facts on how different drugs affect your brain and body, stories, games, etc.
www.teens.drugabuse.gov

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
Publications and statistics on alcohol and its impact on health and public safety.
www.niaaa.nih.gov

Stop Underage Drinking
Resources to help young people understand what alcohol can do to their bodies and brains, and how to refuse.
www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/youth.aspx

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
Describes programs; offers a nationwide treatment locator and suicide prevention information.
www.samhsa.gov

Other Resources

Massachusetts Smokers' Helpline
Talk with someone about quitting smoking.
1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)
TTY: 1-888-229-2182

AA Meetings
Ask about young people's meetings focused on alcohol or drugs.
www.aa.org/pages/en_US/find-aa-resources

Alateen Meetings
Groups for youth from families with substance use problems.
1-508-366-0556
www.ma-al-anon-alateen.org

National Association for Children of Alcoholics
www.nacoa.org

Asking Questions
Improving Health.