

Strategies

for Parents to Prevent or Delay Teen Substance Use

Your teen will be making decisions about substances. As a parent or guardian, you can play an active role in helping to prevent or delay your teen's substance use.

PARENTS PLAY A KEY ROLE IN PREVENTING OR DELAYING TEEN SUBSTANCE USE

Research shows there are six effective parenting strategies that can help prevent or delay substance use in youth. Learn more about each strategy. Take action with tips on how to make a difference.

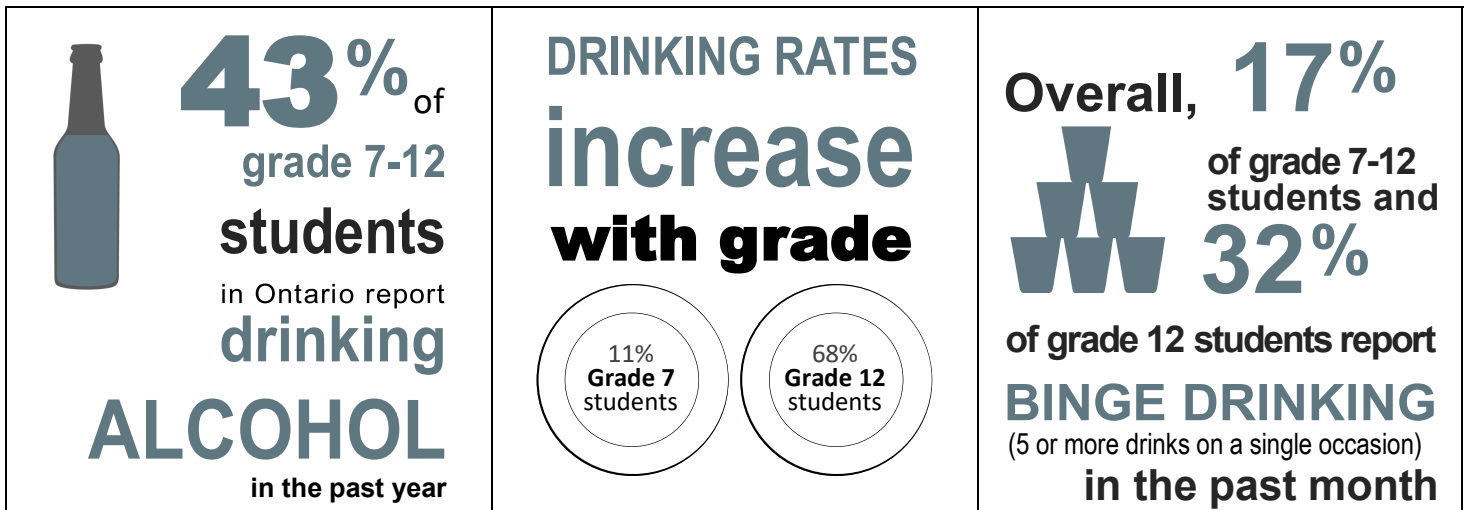


The Six Strategies

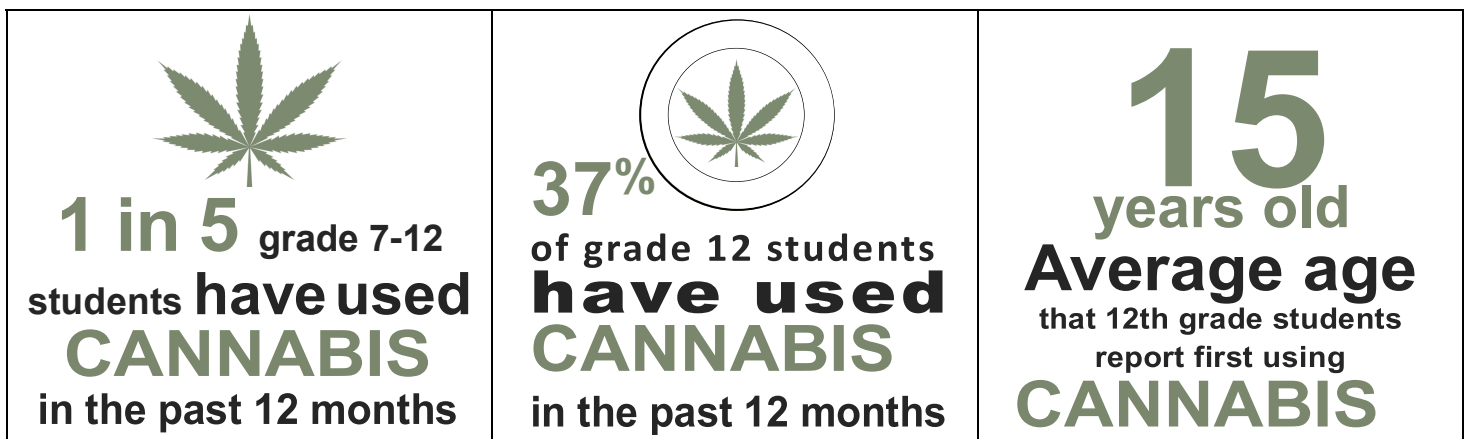
1. Know what's going on in your child's life
2. Develop open and regular communication
3. Set expectations and consequences together
4. Be a positive role model
5. Build a close and caring relationship
6. Know the law

THREE COMMONLY USED SUBSTANCES BY TEENS

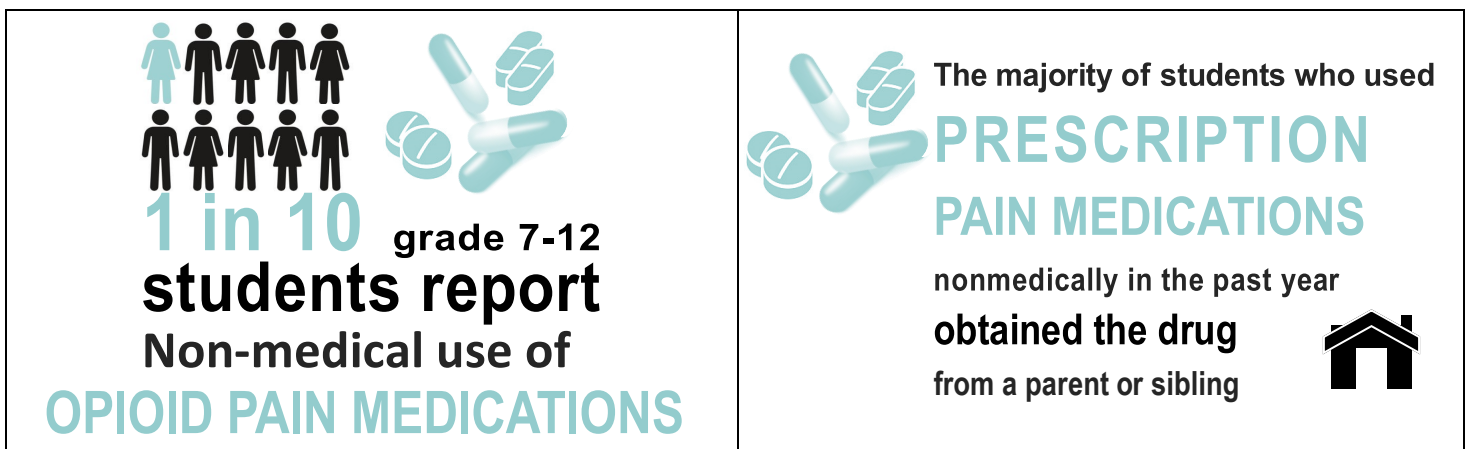
Alcohol



Cannabis



Non-medical Use of Prescription Pain Drugs



Males and females are equally likely to use alcohol, cannabis, or non-medical prescription pain drugs.



COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SUBSTANCES

Alcohol:

Myth: Everyone is drinking.

Fact: About 57% of grade 7 to 12 students in Ontario report not drinking at all in the past year.

Cannabis:

Myth: It's natural and so it is harmless.

Fact: Early and regular cannabis use can affect the developing brain and it is related to mental health problems.

Myth: Everyone is using it.

Fact: 81% of grade 7 to 12 students report not using cannabis.

Myth: Cannabis helps you focus.

Fact: Regular cannabis use impairs thinking, attention, and memory.

Myth: Cannabis makes you a better driver; it's safer than driving after drinking alcohol.

Fact: Cannabis use impairs driving skills and is associated with an increased risk of collisions.

Myth: Cannabis is not addictive

Fact: 1 in 6 adolescents who use cannabis will develop a cannabis use disorder.

Non-medical use of prescription pain drugs:

Myth: They are safer than street drugs because they are prescribed by a doctor.

Fact: A doctor prescribes these medications to people for a specific purpose. It can harm your health if you take any medications that are not prescribed to you.

REASONS WHY TEENS USE SUBSTANCES

Teens are at a stage in their life where they are finding out who they are and what they value. They want to do things on their own and they may take risks.

Here are a few reasons why teens may use substances:

- Thrill seeking
- Having a positive view of a substance
- To have fun in social settings
- Social influences from peers and media
- Having access to substances
- To cope with stress or bad feelings



REMEMBER

Teens report that the number one place they access alcohol and prescription pain medications is from their home or family.

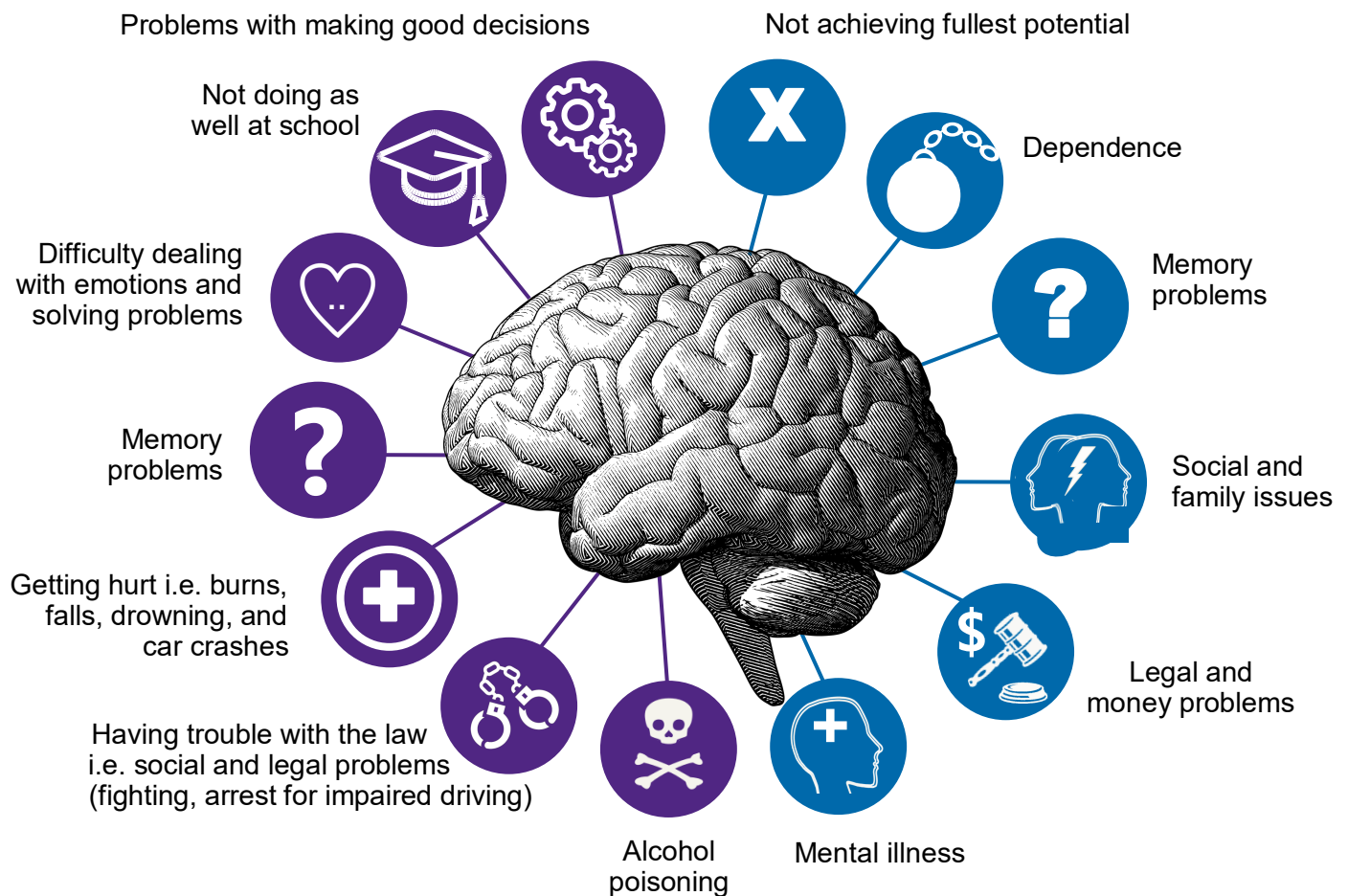


HOW SUBSTANCES HARM THE DEVELOPING BRAIN

Brain growth and development continues into the mid-twenties. Substance use can negatively affect this development.

SHORT TERM RISKS

LONG TERM RISKS



1

Know what's going on in your teen's life

TIPS FOR BEING IN THE KNOW

- Agree on a curfew.
- When your teen is going to a friend's house, ask whether an adult will be home.
- Have your teen check in while they are out.
- Know how your teen is getting home.
- Get to know your teen's friends and their parents.
- Educate your teen on the responsible use of social media.
- Balance your teen's need for privacy with monitoring and adjust as needed.
- Ensure cell phone, computer, or other electronic devices are turned off at bedtime.
- Talk to your teen about what to look for in a friend (e.g., honesty, respect, and kindness).

If teens are going to use substances, they tend to do it when adults are not around.

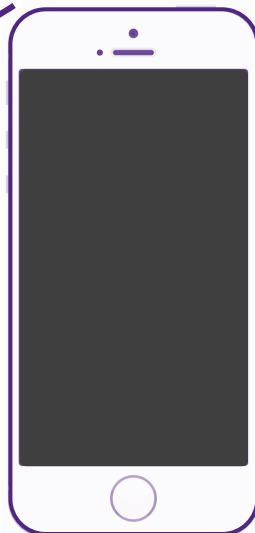
Know who your teen is with.



ACTIVITY IDEAS

Create a Safety Plan

- Agree upon a time to pick up your teen.
- Set clear rules for calling you when plans change.
- Talk about when it's not okay to accept a ride from a friend and acceptable alternatives for getting a ride home.
- Give your teen "safety" money that is carried with them to get home if needed.
- Create a list together of "what if" questions to help you talk about and develop solutions.





HELPFUL RESOURCES

- An interactive parenting program with personalized learning modules:
www.parentingstrategies.net/net/alcohol/#
- A fact sheet on what parents should know about monitoring their teen's activities:
www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/pdf/parental_monitoring_factsheet.pdf



REMEMBER

- Being overly strict can cause your teen to ignore the rules.
- Avoid snooping through your teens' room and belongings.
- Help your teen plan and choose activities to ensure they have healthy activities in which to participate.



2 Develop open and regular communication



ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Plan one-on-one time together. Enjoy activities together such as going for a walk or playing sports.
- Eat dinner together on a regular basis. Spending quality time together promotes open communication.
- Discuss how substances are portrayed and often glamorized in the media (e.g., movies, television, and online).

TIPS TO HELP BUILD COMMUNICATION

- Talk early and often with your teen.
- Prepare for the talk. Know key facts and review laws related to substance use and impaired driving. Learn how substance use is being addressed in your teen's curriculum. Evaluate your own behaviours and attitudes about substance use.
- Listen to what your teen has to say and don't interrupt when they speak.
- Make it a conversation and ask open-ended questions.
- Emphasize the short-term risks. These are of greater concern to teens.
- Stress the fact that many teens are not using substances.
- Explore ways to manage peer pressure.

Ongoing communication allows teens to share their interests and areas of concern with you. It also helps delay substance use.





HELPFUL RESOURCES

- An interactive tool for parents to help them practice talking to their teen about the dangers of alcohol. Create action plans and a family agreement form. Review FAQs your teen may have about alcohol: www.samhsa.gov/underageddrinking/
- Cannabis Talk Kit: Information about cannabis and tools to engage in discussions with your teen about cannabis and other substance use: www.drugfreekidsCanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/34-17-1850-Cannabis-Talk-Kit-EN-10.pdf
- Common questions teens ask about alcohol, cannabis, and prescription medication and answers: <http://parentactionpack.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/PAD-Questions-Teens-Ask-2013.pdf>
- Tips on talking and active listening with your teen: www.drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Quiz-Talking-and-Active-Listening-With-Your-Teen-2014.pdf



REMEMBER

Even if you do not understand your teen's point of view, try to be understanding. Take emotion out of the conversation and avoid being confrontational.

3 Set expectations and consequences together



Setting clear expectations helps create an environment where rules are respected.

TIPS WHEN SETTING CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

- Make sure you and your teen have a clear understanding of what is expected.
- Stay calm when following through with consequences.



ACTIVITY IDEA: DEVELOP FAMILY RULES WITH YOUR TEEN

Work Together

- Set rules before your teen is exposed to a situation involving substances.
- Create a list of appropriate consequences with your teen. Small consequences are best, such as less screen time or no friends over for a specific period of time.
- Base rules and consequences on the age and maturity of your teen.
- Listen to your teen's views and discuss options. Negotiate changes to the rules.
- Write rules in a positive way. Focus on what the teen should do, rather than what they should not do.

Be Consistent

- Administer fair and consistent consequences.
- Follow through right away on consequences. If you do not follow through, you send the message that your rules are not important and it is okay for them to be broken.
- Always offer encouragement when rules are followed.

Seek Support

- Get help if your teen consistently breaks the rules. Seek support from a trusted friend, family member, or family physician.



REMEMBER

- Testing limits is a natural part of growing up.
- Encourage independence while setting realistic limits.



HELPFUL RESOURCES

- A website with general rules for discipline and your teen:
www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Disciplining-Older-Children.aspx
- A website with effective discipline strategies for teens:
www.raisingchildren.net.au/articles/discipline_teenagers.html

4 Be a Positive Role Model

Teens are watching what you do as a parent and are influenced by your behaviours. Think about what messages you are sending your teen.



TIPS ON BEING A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL

- Limit your substance use and don't get drunk or high in front of your teen.
- Show your teen that you and others can have a good time without substances.
- Let your family and close friends know about the values you are teaching your teen and ask them to model responsible behaviour.
- Avoid telling stories where substance use is portrayed as "fun" or "glamorous."
- Avoid using substances to cope with stress. Model healthy stress management strategies, such as going for a walk.
- Avoid making statements after a stressful day such as, "I need a drink."



ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Explore your own values and beliefs about substance use.
- Think about how and when you currently use substances.
- Think about how you want to model responsible substance use to your teen.
- When an actor/actress in a movie or TV show uses substances to help them relax, engage your teen in a conversation about how to reduce stress without substances.



LEAD BY EXAMPLE

As an adult, if you choose to drink alcohol or use cannabis, you can reduce risks to your health and well-being by following Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines and Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines (LRADG):
<http://www.ccsa.ca/Resource%20Library/2012-Canada-Low-Risk-Alcohol-Drinking-Guidelines-Brochure-en.pdf>
- A targeted resource on the impact of alcohol on youth:
<http://www.ccdus.ca/Resource%20Library/CCSA-Youth-and-Alcohol-Summary-2014-en.pdf>
- Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines (LRCUG):
<https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/pdfs---reports-and-books---research/canadas-lower-risk-guidelines-cannabis-pdf.pdf>
- HPEPH's evidence-based key messages about cannabis:
http://www.hpepublichealth.ca/sites/default/files/Summary%20Cannabis%20Key%20Messages%20revised%20September%202017%20HPEPH_website%20version.pdf

REMEMBER

- How much and when parents choose to use substances affects teens' decisions about their own substance use.
- If you want to change the messages you are sending your teen about substances, you can. Talk to your teen about why you are making changes and welcome their questions.

5 Build a close and caring relationship

A close, caring, supportive relationship can help delay teen substance use and lower their chances of developing a habit later in life.

TIPS TO HELP IMPROVE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR TEEN

- Support your teen to find their passions and interests. Help them find their “spark” in life.
- Be involved. Participate in activities that interest your teen and spend one-on-one time together when possible.
- Remind your teen often that you love them.
- Notice when your teen makes good choices and praise them for their efforts and achievements.
- Be consistent and follow through with agreements.
- Show you care. Be warm but firm with your teen.
- Encourage your teen to discuss problems and concerns with you.
- Build your teen’s self-confidence. Teens who have confidence and a positive attitude are more likely to make healthy choices.



ACTIVITY IDEAS: HELP YOUR TEEN FIND THEIR “SPARK”

- Have a conversation: Talk to your teen about activities that bring joy and energy into their life.
- Observe: Notice times when they are having fun and enjoying life by engaging in specific activities.
- Explore: Encourage your teen to try at least one new activity or pursue a new interest. Help them to identify and explore it.
- Make time: Take the opportunity for quality one-on-one time with your teen as you share an interest in their new “spark.”



EXAMPLES OF SPARKS

Festivals



Exercise



Sports



Cooking



Music



Movies



REMEMBER

- Warmth, bonding, and affection are all qualities of a positive parent-teen relationship.
- Talking openly and honestly with your teen is the root of a good relationship.



HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Tip sheets for parents to help their youth find passions and interests in their lives:
www.stepitup2thrive.org/sparks/introduction/
- A scale for parents to use and assess the quality of their parent-teen relationship:
www.performwell.org/index.php/component/mtree/outcomes/relationships/parent-child-relationships/positive-relationship-with-parents-scale-for-teenagers#

6 Know the law

- You must be 19 and older to buy, use, possess, and grow recreational cannabis. This is the same as the minimum age for the sale of tobacco and alcohol in Ontario.
- The Liquor License Act states that no person under 19 years of age shall have, consume, attempt to purchase, purchase or otherwise obtain liquor.
- Prescription medication should only be taken by the individual for whom it is prescribed and only in the amount specified on the prescription. Prevent medication misuse by storing your medications safely and securely. Expired or unused medications should be returned to a pharmacy for proper disposal.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Ontario's Liquor License Act: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90l19>
- The Ontario Government's laws for who can buy and possess cannabis in the province: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/cannabis-legalization>



REMEMBER

When parents make substances available for underage teens, teens are put at risk for substance-related harms, including legal consequences.

TIPS TO HELP DELAY AND PREVENT SUBSTANCE USE

REMEMBER

As a parent, you are legally responsible for what goes on in your house. This applies even if you are not present, you do not know about it, or if guests bring their own substances.



- Establish consistent messages about substance use in your home.
- Discuss with your teen your responsibility as a parent to follow the law and to protect them from substance-related harms.
- Inform your teen about the legality and legal consequences of different substance use.
- Establish rules and expectations with your teen for parties in your home.
- Provide your teen with fun activities that are substance-free.
- Be ready to help your teen find healthier coping strategies if needed.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health website provides resources and tips for hosting a party:
www.camh.ca/en/health-info/guides-and-publications/having-a-party
- Videos from DrinkWise Australia and booklets from Australian Drug Foundation provide tips for hosting a party:
www.stopthesupply.org.au
- The Greater Sudbury Region Guidelines for Parents of Teens Hosting a Party:
www.gspcs.ca/crimeprevention/en/parents/partyliabilities.asp

HELPFUL RESOURCES

WEBSITES

- Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse - www.ccsa.ca
- Parent Action on Drugs - www.parentactionondrugs.org
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health - www.camh.ca
- Hastings Prince Edward Public Health - www.hpePublicHealth.ca

COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

- **Addictions and Mental Health Services Hastings Prince Edward**
(Information about free services for individuals 16+ experiencing problems with substance use, mental health, and gambling.)
 - ◊ For central intake, call **Open Line Open Mind** - 613-310-OPEN (6736)
(24/7 phone response for confidential information, support, and referral to mental health and addictions services in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties. Services offered through walk-ins, appointments, emergency response, and outreach.)
- **Children's Mental Health Services** - 1-844-462-2647
(Free mental health services for children and youth up to 18 years of age and their families, including psychological and psychiatric services, youth justice services, and residential services. Crisis line is available 24/7.)
- **ConnexOntario** - 1-866-531-2600
(24/7, free, confidential health services information for people experiencing problems with alcohol and drugs, mental health, and gambling. Includes live chat.)
- **Crisis Intervention Centre** - 613-969-7400, ext. 2753
(24/7 response to crisis calls and provision of emergency mental health interventions such as assessments, referrals, short-term crisis resolution, and information.)
- **Youthab** - 613-969-0830
(Provides employment, counselling, and housing services to young people in the Quinte area.)
- **Kids Help Phone** - 1-800-668-6868
(Counselling and information available through web chat, app, and by phone.)



HASTINGS PRINCE EDWARD
Public Health

We are committed to providing accessible publications, programs and services to all.
For assistance, please call 613-966-5500; TTY: 711 or email accessibility@hpeph.ca.
For more information, please visit www.hpePublicHealth.ca.



HASTINGS PRINCE EDWARD
Public Health