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For parents from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) background

Alcohol, other drugs and your teenager

Introduction

We all want to keep our children safe and healthy, but as they grow into teenagers we sometimes feel unsure about the best way to help. This can be an even bigger problem for parents who were raised in another culture. They often face issues that weren't a problem when they were growing up in their first country. At the same time, their teenagers may also be struggling to find a balance between their two cultures.

A good way to help your children is by thinking about the risk and protective factors they could face.

Risk factors are things that increase the chances of developing a health problem. For example, cigarette smoking can increase the risk of getting lung cancer.

Protective factors, on the other hand, can help to reduce the chance of developing a health problem by reducing the effects of risk factors. For example, regular exercise and a healthy diet can reduce the risk of developing cancer.

These risk and protective factors can also affect the likelihood of developing behaviour problems. For example, if a young person feels connected to their parents or school they are less likely to show anti-social behaviour.

This fact sheet explains some of the risk and protective factors for alcohol and drug use that young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds may experience. It also outlines how you can use them to help reduce the risk that your teenager will misuse alcohol and other drugs.

Risk factors

There are many risk factors that can increase the chances of a teenager misusing alcohol and other drugs. The more risk factors there are over time, the greater the risk.

Migrating to a new country can be very stressful for anyone. Asylum seekers and refugees will face some different problems from people who leave their country voluntarily.

Some of the common risk factors that teenagers from CLD backgrounds may experience could be:

- › difficulty with a new language
- › difficulty finding their place in a new community
- › conflict between their first country's culture and the Australian culture
- › money problems
- › racism
- › friends using alcohol or other drugs
- › someone in the family using alcohol or other drugs
- › a lack of information about drugs available in their own language.

Protective factors

There are also many protective factors that can help to reduce the effects of risk factors.

As teenagers grow up they still look to the adults that are closest to them for encouragement, guidance and support. Families are very important in helping teenagers cope with life's ups and downs. Some helpful protective factors could include:

- › a close relationship with a caring adult
- › open communication with parents
- › feeling that they belong in a friendship group or at school
- › friends who don't drink alcohol or use drugs
- › good role models
- › a culture or religion that discourages alcohol and drug use.

What can parents do?

There are a number of things that you can do to help reduce the risk that your teenager will misuse alcohol and other drugs. This includes trying to give your teenager as

many of the protective factors as you can. At the same time, you should do what you can to reduce their risk factors.

For example:

- › **Be a good role model.** Try to behave the way you want your teenagers to behave. Don't drink and drive, or smoke cigarettes if you tell them not to do those things.
- › **Show that you are proud of your teenagers when they behave well.** They will be discouraged if you only notice when they do something wrong. Talk to them to find out what they think is fair, and then set some clear rules about alcohol and other drug use. This makes it easier for them to do the right thing.
- › **Get to know your teenagers' friends and their parents.** It helps to talk to parents who are facing the same situations, and to see how they are dealing with them.
- › **Find out about drugs.** Read what you can, look at some of the websites listed on this fact sheet, or ask at your local health service. If you don't know the answer to a question, find out rather than making it up.
- › **Talk openly and honestly to your teenager.** Sometimes this can be difficult to do but it is an important protective factor. It may be hard for many reasons, for example, some cultures don't like to talk openly about drugs or you might feel that you don't know enough about it. There may also be language problems if you and your teenager have different first languages. Your teenager might also be worried that if they ask questions you may think they are using alcohol or other drugs.

When you speak to your teenager about alcohol and other drugs:

- › Choose a time when neither of you are tired, angry or likely to be interrupted.
- › Listen to your teenager to find out what they think and feel. Ask them their thoughts about alcohol and other drugs.
- › Talk about what you think is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Ask your teenager what they think is acceptable.
- › Learn about alcohol and other drugs, so you can be sure you are giving them the right information.
- › Try to stay calm, even when your teenager has said or done something that may upset you.
- › Try not to bring up their past mistakes.

For more information

DrugInfo Clearinghouse www.druginfo.adf.org.au

Drug and Alcohol Multicultural Education Centre
www.damec.org.au

National Drugs Campaign [www.drugs.health.gov.au/
internet/drugs/publishing.nsf/Content/languages](http://www.drugs.health.gov.au/internet/drugs/publishing.nsf/Content/languages)

State Government of Victoria Drug Services (Victoria)
www.health.vic.gov.au/drugs/lang.htm

More information

For more information on drugs and drug prevention contact the DrugInfo Clearinghouse on tel. 1300 8585 84, email druginfo@adf.org.au, or see our website www.druginfo.adf.org.au