



Parent Guidelines

for surviving high school socially



Alcohol
and Drug
Foundation

Local Drug Action Team Program

Why is this book relevant to me?

As your child transitions from Primary School to High School, it's crucial you have some information you can refer to regarding your child's social development as they meet new friends and enter a larger and more complex social circle.

This booklet has information on how to manage some of the trickier issues that will arise as your child navigates their new world and enters adolescence.

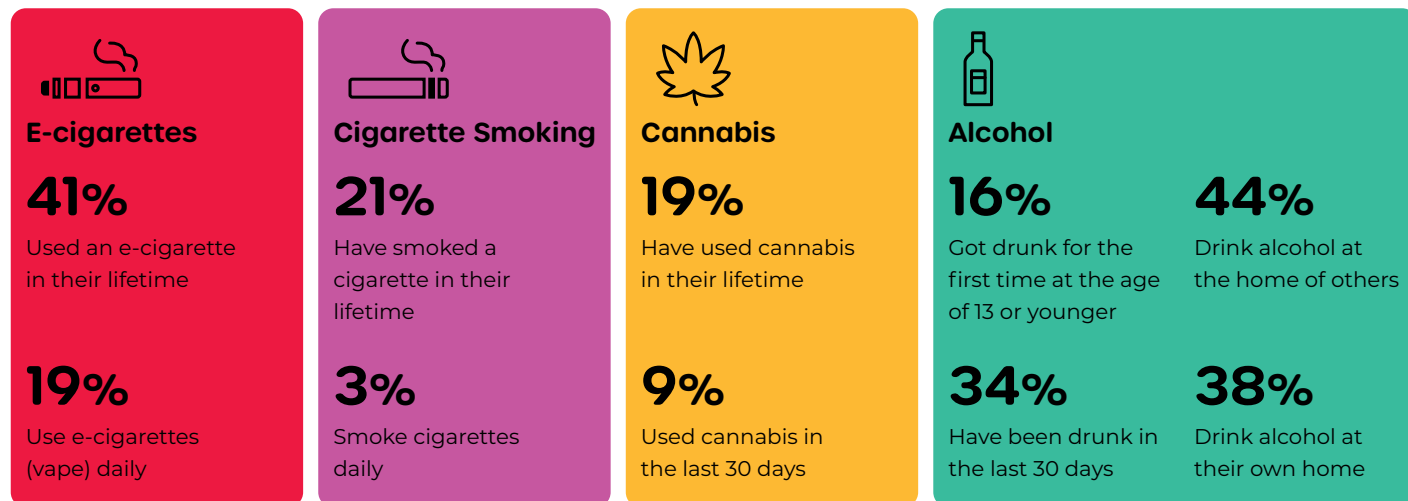
In 2023, Substance Misuse Limestone Coast (SMLC) coordinated the Limestone Coast Planet Youth Secondary School survey of Year 10s (15-year-old children), collaborating with the Alcohol and Drug Foundation and the Planet Youth Team in Iceland.

The Limestone Coast survey results show that there is work to be done in educating parents about the harms of alcohol and strategies for keeping our children safe from alcohol and other drug harms.



Substance use

Survey results from 2023 15-year-old Year 10s in Limestone Coast Secondary Schools.



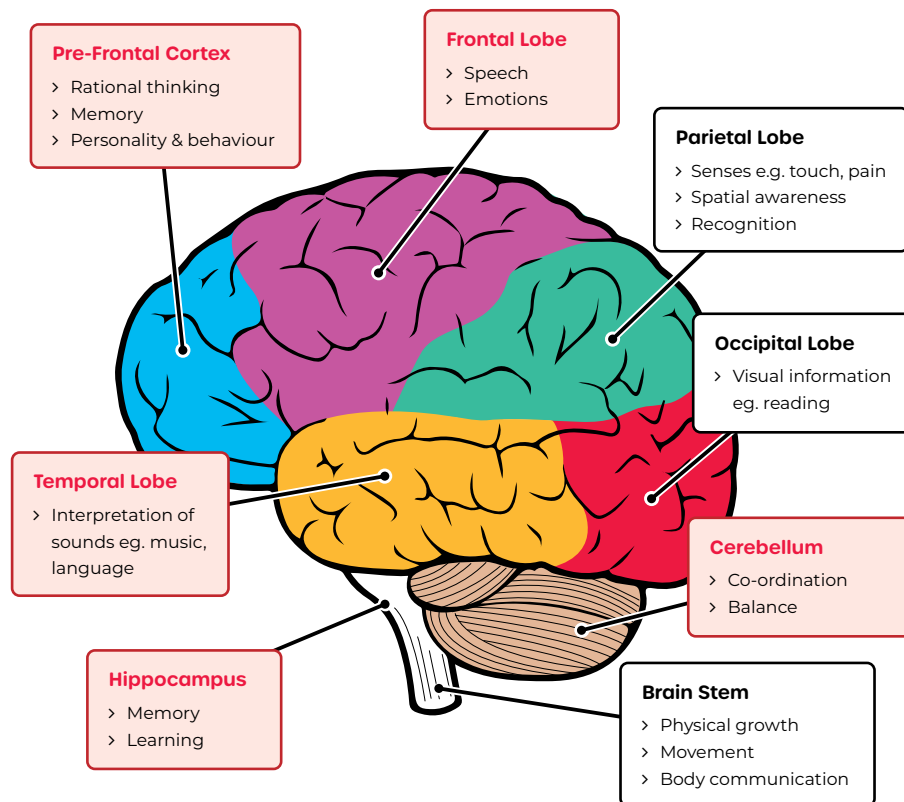
As parents, we are always learning and growing – especially when we come across new information about how to keep our kids healthy and safe.

Alcohol and the adolescent brain

Talking to your children openly about alcohol's harms and refusing to supply it will help keep them and their friends safe.

Everyone has a different approach to parenting, but most parents choose not to give alcohol to their underage children, knowing that it harms developing brains even in small doses. They also don't want their children growing up thinking alcohol is necessary to have fun, relax, and socialise. It's ok to say no; other parents will support you.

Areas of the brain and functions affected by alcohol (in red)



Did you know?

Health experts have found that even small amounts of alcohol are harmful to the developing brain.

The effects can be anything from finding schoolwork harder to trouble processing emotions or performing in sports. Not drinking means that teenagers can keep their developing brains safe.

Tip:

The best thing we can do as parents is to delay our children from drinking until they are 18.

Because of the harms to the developing brain, alcohol use before 18 can lead to having problems with alcohol later on.

Adolescent brains are more sensitive to alcohol.

Alcohol can affect brain development in the areas which play an important role in learning capabilities, memory function and verbal skills.

Adolescent drinking inhibits the growth of neurons and decreases the process of myelination (transmitting electrical signals), causing up to a 10% reduction in the size of the hippocampus.

Alcohol

The local Planet Youth survey shows us that up to 55% of Limestone Coast Year 10s have been drunk in their lifetime, and 34% have been drunk in the last 30 days.

The evidence is clear that the best thing we can do as parents is to delay and defer any alcohol use for as long as possible.

There is no evidence to support the view that parental supply of alcohol protects our children from adverse drinking outcomes.

Alcohol is carcinogenic and is in the same category as tobacco and other products strongly linked to cancer. Every alcoholic drink increases the risk of developing breast, liver, mouth, bowel, and other cancers.

Ref: canceraustralia.gov.au/resources/position-statements/lifestyle-risk-factors-and-primary-prevention-cancer/lifestyle-risk-1



What you can do

Not drinking means that teenagers can keep their developing brains safe from harm. Helping teenagers enjoy an alcohol-free youth sets them up for a healthier future.

By agreeing as parents collectively not to give any alcohol to adolescents, we can make a positive difference to the long-term health and well-being of our young people, and empower other parents to say no.

55%
Drunk in
their lifetime

44%
Drink at others'
homes

Tip: How to say “NO” to alcohol

Talk to your child about the situations where they may be exposed to alcohol. Help them build their confidence to say “no” if they are being pressured by their peers. You can do this by discussing these tips for young people in saying no to alcohol or any other drug.

- No thanks, I'm planning on going for a run tomorrow with (insert name or person) to keep my fitness up
- No thanks, I have to be up early to do some jobs for mum/dad early tomorrow
- No thanks, I have a family show tomorrow, and it's a 2-hour drive, and we are leaving early tomorrow morning.
- No thanks, I've had a drink and don't really like it, so I'm switching to a soft drink/water

Sleep

The local Planet Youth school survey shows that half of Limestone Coast Year 10s are not getting enough sleep.

Sleep is just as important to a child's development and well-being as nutrition and physical activity.

In children and young people good sleep health is important for healthy brain and body development and is associated with improved learning outcomes.

It is recommended that teenagers get a minimum of 9 – 11 hours of undisturbed sleep every night.

For example, a Year 7 student who gets out of bed at 7:00 am would start their bedtime routine at 7:00 pm, brush their teeth, etc., read and wind down in bed before lights out. They would be ASLEEP by 9.00 pm to get 10 hours of sleep. Screens and devices would be turned off and out of bedrooms at least one hour before lights out.

Reference: www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au

Year level	In bed	Asleep by
YEAR 7	7:30 PM	9:00 PM
YEAR 8	8:00 PM	9:30 PM
YEAR 9	8:30 PM	9:45 PM
YEAR 10	9:00 PM	10:00 PM
YEAR 11	9:30 PM	10:15 PM
YEAR 12	10:00 PM	10:30 PM

Screen time

Screen time during childhood can have long-term impacts on a child's development. For children and young people, recreational screen time is recommended to be kept to no more than 2 hours per day, after homework and other activities are completed.

Limiting the time spent in front of screens to no more than 2 hours helps children grow and develop good habits for life.

If you can have these guidelines in place from the first year of High School, they will become increasingly important as your child gets older.

Talk to your child about their online life and be a good role model with your own screen use.



Vaping

With good reason, there’s been a lot of concern about our young people vaping, as the Limestone Coast Planet Youth school survey shows.

Most vapes contain nicotine, even if they say they don't. No vapes are legal for young people under 18. Nicotine exposure during the teenage years can harm brain development and impact learning, memory, and attention, and is highly addictive.

Vapes/e-cigarettes are battery-operated devices that hold and heat liquids to create an aerosol which the person breathes in. Although they're called vapes, it is not water vapour that is being inhaled, it is aerosol.

19%
Limestone Coast Year 10s
in 2023 vape daily

41%
Limestone Coast Year 10's in
2023 have vaped in their lifetime

What is in a vape?

Vapes contain hundreds of chemicals, many of which are toxic	Flavouring is added to hide the taste of the chemical.
Flavourings are not safe to inhale.	When a vape heats up, it can leak heavy metals into the aerosol, which can get stuck in the person’s lungs.
Most vapes contain nicotine, even if it's not listed on the label.	Nicotine is the chemical that causes dependence.
The amount of nicotine in a single vape can be the same as 50 cigarettes, and sometimes much more.	Because vaping is relatively new to society, many of the longer-term health impacts are unknown, including damage to the lungs and the brain.

Some main reasons why young people report trying vaping include:

Peer pressure. To fit in or impress others. Curiosity or experimentation. Believing it can help relieve stress or negative thoughts. Believing it is a safe alternative to smoking tobacco cigarettes.

What your child can say when someone is pressuring them to vape.

No thanks, I've got basketball tomorrow and I want to be good at it.	No thanks, I don't vape.
No thanks, not today / not tonight	No thanks, I don't feel like it.

Teenage parties

Steps for planning a teenage party

Plan it with your child.

Agree on the ground rules before the party is announced – ensures no misunderstandings.

Plan that no alcohol will be served or allowed to be brought in.

Plan who will make things known to guests and how this will be done.

Discuss and agree to how many are invited.

Discuss and agree how the invitations be sent.

Tip: No social media invitations, they are often passed on.

Tip: Use phone or email to send invitations, and invite parents to contact you.

What you can do

If the party is at your home or a venue, as parents, you have a legal duty of care to ensure the safety of all your guests. Get to know your child's friends' parents, have their phone numbers, and tell them the party is alcohol free.

Decide how you will respond if there is alcohol or drugs brought to the party, or if anyone arrives under the influence.

Tip:

Remove the alcohol and tell them you will take care of it while they are in your home, return it to their parent or carer. If they are under the influence, call their parent to collect them.

Stop the supply

The law says adults must have parents' permission before another parent or adult can supply a child with alcohol.

Your child is going to a party

Let your child know they can call you at any time, in any condition, if they or their friends need help – no questions asked.

Ensure your child's phone has all your phone numbers and other emergency contacts.

Give your contact details to at least one of your child's friends.

Ensure your child has enough money for an emergency taxi.

Have a coded message that your child can use if they're embarrassed about calling to ask to come home. E.g., sending a message asking about a sick grandparent.

Strategies to help your child say "no" to alcohol. (see page 4.)

Parents working together

The Planet Youth Limestone Coast Survey had some really positive findings relating to family life and the relationships that our teenagers have with their parents.

Parental monitoring



87%

Of parents know where their teenagers are in the evenings



75%

Of parents know the parents of their child's friends

Family Time - Having shared interests, regular family mealtimes, family activities, and meetings creates enjoyable time and space to chat with and listen to our teenagers. As they get older, it is important to maintain good-quality communication with them and to stay connected, interested, and engaged in what's happening in their lives.

As parents, we are the most important role models for our teenage children, so it is important that we set good examples with our own behaviours.

Be clear and explain your views on the use of alcohol and other drugs, and use facts to back them up. Check out the Australian alcohol guidelines. They state the safest option for people under 18 is not to drink.

Be curious with your child and their views on alcohol and other drugs. Ask what they'd do in different situations and listen to their opinions. By remaining open and keeping your body language and tone respectful, you encourage open conversation.

** Listen to their opinions, and ensure your child knows they can talk to you about any concerns they have – at any time.

Set rules and consequences - Establish clear rules for inside and outside the home, and make sure they know what the consequences are for breaking them. Consequences may have Tiers, depending on the rule that has been broken.

Help them navigate tricky situations – Give your child some strategies to help them get out of situations where they may feel pressured to use alcohol or other drugs. You could also let them know that you are always available to pick them up if they are feeling uncomfortable.

Share your rules and consequences with other parents, and be a collective voice for your child and their friends for their long-term health and well-being.

Reference: adf.org.au/talking-about-drugs/parenting-talk/



Scan the QR code, it will lead you to a 2-question survey about what you have read. Your feedback will tell us information for future booklets.