



What do media have to do with children's use of Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs?

During this developmental stage many children will start to become more curious about the use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs that they see in the media. Subsequently, it is important for kids to learn how to critically evaluate media messages about substance use. This tip sheet can help you monitor and guide your children's media choices and provide steps for teaching children media

How can media affect substance use?



*Depictions of tobacco, alcohol and drug use in media often lack dialogue or information about possible negative health, social and legal consequences. Over-exposure may lead to children forming inaccurate beliefs about substance use, and they may begin to use at a young age.

❖Media messages from movies, video games, TV, advertisements, and the internet often legitimize, normalize, trivialize, or even glorify substance use by using celebrity endorsers and attractive characters that children see as desirable role models.

◆Children receive many mixed messages about substance use from media, peers, teachers and parents. For example, they may be told by teachers that consuming too much alcohol can be bad for their health, but only see actors having a great time drinking on TV without any negative consequences. Subsequently, kids may have difficulty understanding which information is accurate.

What can I do?

* When possible, watch, read or play with your child. This can help you monitor the content they are exposed to and enables you to start discussions about the health, social and legal consequences of both short and long-term substance use.

❖Some exposure is unavoidable therefore try to teach and encourage your child to use her critical thinking skills to access, deconstruct and challenge the often manipulative messages associated with the substance use content she consumes.

◆Check-in regularly with your child about what she or he is reading, seeing, hearing and wondering about substance use. Make available developmentally appropriate resources about the negative consequences of too much substance use.

