



Play Clean

A guide for caregivers
of young athletes





Caregivers

As one of the caring adults in a child's life, your behavior, opinion and expectations can have an immense impact on the choices they make.

Children who learn about the dangers of drugs from their parents are 50% less likely to use drugs. Unfortunately, only 32% of youth reported they learned about drugs from their parents. (nccadd.org).

Youth begin using earlier than adults think. Research shows that caregivers need to start talking about drugs & alcohol by age 10.



Youth

Average Age of First use:

12 years, 2 months- Alcohol
12 years, 6 months- Cigarettes
13 years, 11 months - Marijuana

Children's brains are still developing during middle and high school years. The part of their brain responsible for decision making will not fully develop until they are 25 years old.

Signals Your Child Might Be Using Substances:

- Abnormal pupil size
- Change in mood
- Change in priorities around school & practice
- Drastic change in social circle
- Extreme itching
- Lack of focus
- Loss of coordination



Why?

Why Do Youth Use Drugs?

Drug & alcohol use can be used as a coping mechanism for youth who may not have access to healthier methods when faced with;

- daily stress & demands
- anxiety & depression
- traumatic experiences
- grief & loss
- peer pressure

Why Do Athletes Use Drugs?

Athletes may face additional pressure to achieve success from themselves, their families, community and teammates.

Additionally, athletes may be more likely to be prescribed pain medication after an injury.

What You Can Do

As a caregiver it is important to teach your child about healthy coping mechanisms & the risks of pain medication

To Prevent:

- Welcome conversations about mental health & wellness, substance use & family addiction history.
- Encourage use of healthy coping mechanisms in your child's life
 - practice breathing exercises
 - set boundaries with relationships
 - normalize asking for help
- Properly dispose of old medications
- Set expectations for situations where substances might be present.
- Help your child understand the effects of using drugs & alcohol.
- Keep conversations factual and avoid using fear tactics that might shut down conversations.

To Respond:

Taking time to understand what is going on in your child's life, will help reduce conflict and help you respond to the situation appropriately.

- **Risk Assessment** - determine your child's level of use, drugs they are taking & what might trigger their drug use.
- Answering some of these questions might inform whether your child needs additional education around substances, support in changing habits & behaviors, or possibly treatment and rehabilitation.



Resources

Anoka County: AnokaCounty.us/GetHelp

For Jakes Sake: ForJakesake.org

Know The Truth: mntc.org

Parent Talk Kit: DrugFree.org

Service Finder: Fast-TrackerMN.org

Toll-Free Help Line: 1-855-DrugFree

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