

What to do with Teenage Parties

When your teen is having a party:

Plan in advance—Parents and child should discuss party plans before the party to decide on:

- Date and time: a start and end time will set a clear time frame
- Guest list: an “open party” situation can be avoided by making a guest list; smaller groups (10-20) tend to make interaction and activities easier
- Activities: plan a variety of activities to fill the time such as sports, movie rentals or games
- Food: have plenty of food and non-alcoholic drinks on hand; food can also be used as a party activity (i.e.: barbecuing or baking)

Parents should remove all alcoholic beverages belonging to them if in the same area where the party is being held.

Agree to rules ahead of time: Children should understand that they are held accountable for their own actions and activities. However, some basic rules should be discussed with the child preceding the party, including:

- No alcohol or other drugs allowed
- Once a child has left the party, they cannot return
- No gatecrashers
- Lights must be left on
- Guests are only allowed in certain rooms/areas of the house

Parents must be present at the party: The presence of an involved, concerned parent at a party makes a positive difference that should never be underestimated. Parents help to keep the party under control and help to ensure the safety of all attending. If a large party is anticipated, parents should enlist the help of other adults who can not only help with potential problems, but also act as company for the parents. Here are some other helpful guidelines for parents:

- You must be visible and present at all times
- Do not leave the party even for a short time
- Be at the door when guests arrive. Be alert as to who is present
- Greet parents who have driven children to the party
- Contain the party to your house and backyard
- Notify police when giving a large party so that you can discuss parking plans and other concerns
- Discuss the party afterwards with your teenager and share your observations and possible frustration

When you are out of town

When parents leave town, their homes frequently become sites for parties. There is also great pressure on teenagers whose parents are away to hold a party at their house; therefore, parents must take some precautions before leaving:

- Clarify with your teenager what you expect from him/her while you are away, as well as their responsibilities and the consequences of their actions
- Have a responsible adult stay in your home while you're away; explain your family policies and rules regarding parties

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- Inform your neighbors of your absence; let them know who is staying at your house in your absence and request that they contact you, the adult in the house or even the police, if a party occurs
- Let the parents of your child's friends know about your absence - cooperation among parents and community members is essential and productive

In the event that a party is held, find out who attended and contact their parents as soon as possible.

When your teen is attending a party

Call the host—Personally contact the parents of the party giver to:

- Verify the event
- Offer assistance and support
- Ensure that the parents will be present
- Be certain that alcohol and drugs will not be permitted

Your child may be upset that you are calling; if this happens, remind your child that you are doing it because you love them and because you care enough to check. Establish a “No Call - No Party” rule and enforce it firmly.

- Check the party plans with your child beforehand: Make sure you have the phone number and address of the party and instruct your child to inform you of any change in location. It's also important to know the names and phone numbers of other invited guests.
- Know how your child is getting to and from the party
- Make it easy for your child to leave the party: Arrange that you, a family friend or relative can be called if a ride home is needed. Discuss the possible situations that might warrant your child to leave early. Reinforce that your child should never get a ride home from someone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol under any circumstance.
- Agree on an acceptable curfew
- Verify overnight arrangements: If your child is planning on sleeping over at a friend's house after the party, personally verify the plans with the parents

When your teen arrives home

- Spend a few minutes communicating with your child upon his/her return home, not to attack them or make them defensive about the party but to ensure that everything is all right and to talk with them about any concerns. Open communication is imperative and must be attempted.
- If your child is acting inappropriately or unusually, you might consider the possibility that they have been drinking or taking illegal drugs. The three warning signs that kids are not able to hide are the eyes, speech and coordination.
- Reiterate that the rules you enforce are made in their best interest

If your teenager attends a party where alcohol is either served by the parents or allowed, it is important to:

- Call to discuss your feelings with the parents
- Discuss the legal ramifications with them
- Share your concerns with other parents