

What comes to mind when you think of the holidays? Sitting in front of a warm glowing fire? Spending time with loved ones? Eating too much? Where does substance use fit into this picture?

Holiday parties give people more chances to use drugs and alcohol. The result is an increase in drug- and alcohol-related tragedies. According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving, at least 50 percent of all deadly car crashes that take place during the holiday season involve alcohol.

These factors may mean that your child is more exposed to substance abuse-whether it's an uncle who drinks too much during your holiday dinner or a friend who offers your teen marijuana at a New Year's Eve party. The incidence of alcohol poisoning of children is common during the holiday season. So, during this time, it is especially important that parents keep their children safe and talk with them about staying away from drugs and alcohol.

### **Holiday Celebration Tips:**

Let your child know what you expect. Tell your child that adults may be drinking during the holidays but under no circumstances is she allowed to drink alcohol.

At your holiday gatherings, offer plenty of nonalcoholic foods, drinks, and activities.

To lower the risk of alcohol poisoning, be sure to throw out partly empty alcoholic drinks. Children love to imitate adults, and if they have access to leftover drinks, they may taste the contents.

Have a plan in place about what you and your family will do if you are at a party where there are people who have had too much to drink.

Model responsible behavior by making sure that guests who have been drinking do not drive.

Why not create some substance-free holiday traditions for your family? It's a great way to show your child that you can have fun during the holidays without alcohol or drugs.

### **Alcohol-Free Holiday Tips:**

Plan a nonalcoholic holiday party with your child so children learn that they can have fun without alcohol. Send out invitations with alcohol- and drug-free messages on them, and make sure the guests know that yours will be a substance-free event.

For your holiday meal, let your child help you prepare and serve traditional drinks without alcohol. You can make nonalcoholic cider, eggnog, or punch. Make sure your holiday festivities involve lots of delicious-and nonalcoholic-food, which your child can help you make.

If your older child is going to a holiday event, call ahead to make sure that the event will be alcohol and drug free. Check in with the party planners to see what measures are in place to keep alcohol out.

If you have trouble controlling your own substance use during the holidays, you should seek help.

Explain to your potential gift-givers why you do not wish to receive holiday gifts of wine or other types of alcohol. This sets an example for your child. You are showing your child how to enjoy a safe, sober

holiday season. The gift of an alcohol-free lifestyle lasts long after the holidays are over.

Prepared by: Shana N. Marshall, BA, CADC

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