

# Clear Heads, Bright Futures

PARENTS: AGE APPROPRIATE CANNABIS CONVERSATIONS



## Children 8 and under



Having age appropriate conversations about serious matters helps build a foundation of trust. The foundation is about instilling the importance of taking care of one's mind and body at a young age and helps them prepare for if and when they face difficult situations.

- Emphasize the importance of taking care of their bodies by eating healthy, playing and getting exercise, and getting enough sleep.



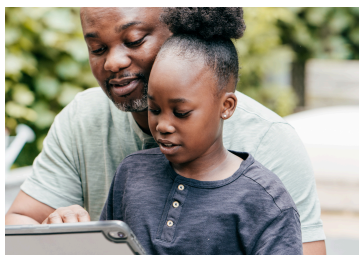
- If your child takes vitamins or is prescribed medication by a doctor, use this as an opportunity to mention that they should only take such substances from their guardian or doctor, and explain that taking someone else's vitamins or medication can make them sick.

- Teach your child to say “no” to things that make them feel uncomfortable, unsure, or seem dangerous. They can use phrases like: “I am not comfortable with that” or “My parents need to know about this.”



## Children 9-12

Having age appropriate conversations about cannabis with your child at this point may seem premature, but children at this age are inherently curious and are quickly absorbing the world around them. Starting a dialogue now will open the lines of communication so they see you as a trusted source of information and support.



- Take advantage of teaching opportunities. By this age, your child may have seen or heard cannabis mentioned at school, on television or in movies, or passed by cannabis storefronts. When the moment presents itself, explain how and why these substances are dangerous for young people, and that they can seriously damage their health and wellbeing.

- Ask your child if they've heard about drugs and be prepared to answer any questions they may have. If they seem uninterested, reassure them that you are someone they can come to talk about this or anything that concerns them.
- Lead by example – your child is watching your actions and may try to mimic what you do. Be prudent if you have a household member that uses cannabis, remind them to refrain from doing so in front of children, and lock up cannabis products so that they aren't accessible to children.
- Practice saying no and what they should do if someone offers them drugs.



## Children 13-16

By this age, your teen may be exposed to cannabis by their friends or peers, or may have even tried it themselves. It's important that they still feel safe coming to you with questions or concerns without fear of judgment or punishment. Be ready to have an honest, and maybe even uncomfortable, conversation.

- Be upfront about your expectations and remind them of the reasons there are age limits for recreational drugs. Brains develop well into a person's 20s and cannabis can interfere with cognitive development.



- Consider creating a code word with your child so they can communicate to you if they've been put in a compromising situation with drugs. This will allow you to help them out of it without their peers knowing.



- Remember what it's like to be a kid. Your child's likely experiencing new thoughts and emotions relating to drugs or peers, so it's important that you remain calm, be engaged, and foster an environment that encourages them to continue speaking with you.

## Teens and young adults 17-20

As your child nears or reaches adulthood, accept the hard truth that they may decide to experiment with cannabis. While you can't necessarily stop them, you can educate them and be candid about how drug abuse can have real consequences.

- Explain cannabis laws and consequences for engaging in illegal-cannabis activities. In California, you must be 21 to legally possess and use cannabis. It's also illegal to drive with unsealed cannabis containers, smoke in public, take cannabis across state lines, and use or possess cannabis on federal land.



- If they're heading off to college, joining the workforce, or doing something else that involves increased independence, discuss how they can best navigate their newfound freedom without compromising their academics, employment, or safety.



- Emphasize that they should never drive or get in the car with someone who's under the influence. If a parent or guardian is able, offer to pick them up or order them a car service if they're too impaired to get home.
- Enlist the help of friends, aunts, uncles, or other family or community members that you trust and your child respects.