

Your Preschooler

Believe it or not, your child's preschool years are a great time to set the stage for a drug-free life. The foundations for all healthy habits—from nutritious eating to proper hygiene—are laid down during the preschool years. And kids who resist early drug experimentation are often good at problem solving and self-help—two of the skill sets your preschooler is beginning to develop.

One of the most wonderful things about preschoolers is how much they rely upon the adults in their lives. Perhaps at no other point in life is your approval as highly prized or your teaching as well received as during these years of unconditional devotion.

The following tips will help you work with your preschooler so that they'll grow up happy, healthy, and drug-free. (And they'll even help you have tons of fun!)

- **Talk to your child about the joys of healthy living.** Discuss how good you feel when you eat healthy, get plenty of rest and refuse to consume harmful substances into your body.
- **Celebrate your child's decision-making skills.** Whenever possible, let your child choose what to wear. Even if the clothes don't quite match, you are reinforcing your child's ability to make decisions.
- **Stress your child's need to take personal responsibility for his own health and well-being (self-help skills).** Your information should be concrete, relate to your child's experiences, and stated positively. Turn chores like brushing teeth, putting away toys, wiping up spills, and caring for pets into fun experiences that your child will enjoy. Break the activities down into manageable steps so that your child learns to develop plans.
- **Help your child steer clear of dangerous substances that exist in her immediate world.** Point out poisonous and harmful substances commonly found in homes, such as bleach, kitchen cleansers, and furniture polish. Read the products' warning labels out loud to your child. Explain that not all "bad" drugs have warnings on them, so she should only eat or smell food or a prescribed medicine that you, a relative, or other known caregivers give to her. Also, explain that drugs from the doctor help the person the doctor gives them to but that they can harm anyone else.
- **Help your child separate make-believe from real life.** Preschoolers give meaning to things they don't understand in order to make sense of their world—but their meaning doesn't necessarily reflect the real world. Ask your child what he thinks about a TV program or story. Let your child know about your likes and dislikes. Discuss how violence or bad decisions can hurt people.

- **Turn frustration into a learning opportunity.** If a tower of blocks keeps collapsing during a play session, work with your child to find possible solutions to the problem.
- **Tell your child how proud you are when she's helpful.** There's never a bad time to give your child a boost in the self-esteem department.

What drugs are in the preschooler's world?

- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Inhalants

Source: Drug Free America

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