

In the past, my teen admitted to using marijuana. Recently, we noticed some alcohol missing from our home. I am concerned that my teen may be drinking. Given that this is already a very stressful time, how do I address this with my teen while not creating another crisis?

A: Many teens may be turning to alcohol as a way to cope with this difficult and isolating time due to it being legal and accessible in some homes. The availability and lack of odor makes it easy to hide. When you notice alcohol missing in your home, have this discussion with your teen when you have had time to process your own thoughts and emotions. While many teens may try to deny their guilt, the goal of this conversation is to keep the lines of communication open rather than an admission of guilt. It is also an opportunity to discuss the family expectations and dangers around substance use. [GYFS Substance Abuse Prevention](#) Coordinator, Mirela Mujcinovic, cites the following warning signs of teen substance use/abuse: changes in child's mood, academic decline, rebellion, changing friend groups, and less interest in activities or in appearance. To prevent further attempts of sneaking alcohol, keep alcohol and any prescribed medicine locked away and be aware of any changes. When you notice your teen isolating in their room, try to engage them in a family activity. Get to know your teen's friends, make your home a welcoming place for friends, and stay visible during these teen gatherings. It is most important to talk early and often about alcohol use with a focus on clear boundaries and consequences.