





# Red Ribbon Week



October 22 – October 26

Every year we come together as a community to show our support for our children during Red Ribbon Week. Based on our data from the Illinois Youth Survey, we know that the majority of Lake Zurich youth make healthy choices, especially around substances. **Most youth in Lake Zurich schools are alcohol and drug-free.** Throughout Red Ribbon Week, take time to discuss healthy choices with your child.

Most likely children in younger grades are not tempted by alcohol and other drugs; however, elementary school is still a great time to *start the conversation* about healthy/safe choices vs. unhealthy/unsafe choices. Some examples of healthy/safe choices could be related to nutrition, exercise, wearing a helmet when riding a bike, getting enough sleep, being inclusive with classmates rather than exclusive at recess, and of course avoiding alcohol and only using prescription drugs when prescribed to them/given by a parent.

By 3rd to 6th grade, students may become more curious about alcohol and other drugs. A common question youth often ask is why can adults drink alcohol and children can't? The main reason is because the brain doesn't fully develop until about 25 years old and alcohol affects the developing youth's brain differently than an adult's fully developed brain. Red Ribbon Week is a great time to have a conversation with your child to help set the stage for a healthy future.

In middle to high school, students receive many messages from the media, their friends, school, parents and the community related to alcohol and other drugs. Parents can sometimes feel that their child's friends and the media are bigger influences in their child's life. Not true– your voice matters! Substance abuse prevention research says **parents are the #1 reason youth choose to be alcohol and drug-free.**

Vaping has become a new trend among middle and high school students. Vaping is not safe for teens. Vapes and electronic cigarettes are not just "flavored water". They contain nicotine and carcinogens. The labels on the packages can be misleading. Scientists have found nicotine in vapes that claim to not have any or they contained higher nicotine levels than stated on the label. Nicotine is a very addictive drug and since the teen brain is still developing, youth are at a higher risk of addiction. Vape liquid (or "e-juice") contains carcinogens and other chemicals deemed harmful by the FDA. Current research shows that teens who vape are more likely to begin smoking "traditional" cigarettes. The best option for teens is to not vape.

**Take the Red Ribbon Pledge and help create a safe, healthy and drug-free community for our children.**

## WHAT'S THE PLEDGE?

- I will talk to my children about the dangers of alcohol and other drug use.
- I will set clear rules for my children about not using alcohol or other drugs.
- I will set a good example by not using illegal drugs or medicine without a prescription.
- I will monitor my child's behavior and enforce consequences.
- I will encourage family and friends to follow the same guidelines to keep children safe from substance abuse.
- I will provide safe places for my children to hang out and not host underage drinking parties.

To take the Red Ribbon pledge visit: <http://redribbon.org/pledge>



Get involved in teen drug prevention through the Ela Coalition Against Substance Abuse:  
[www.facebook.com/elacoalition/](http://www.facebook.com/elacoalition/)  
[info@elacoalition.org](mailto:info@elacoalition.org)

# Parents- your voice matters!

## When Parents Talk, Youth Listen.

- Start the conversation *before* youth start using and *keep talking*.
- Short and frequent conversations are better than the occasional “big talk”.
- The average age youth start drinking alcohol (if they decide to drink) is 13-14 years.
- Alcohol is the most used substance by teens. Research says to start talking about 5 years before the average age they start drinking, or about 8 or 9 years old.

## Use “Teachable Moments” to ask Open-Ended Questions.

- Use Red Ribbon Week as a conversation starter. Ask your child about healthy/safe choices vs. unhealthy/unsafe choices.
- For middle and high school youth ask them what they would like to accomplish in their future and what things might get in the way of them achieving that dream. (*most likely drug use will come up*)
- For middle and high school youth ask them what they would do if they ended up at a party with alcohol or other drugs. Discuss a plan so your child knows what to do.
- Use stories in the media or movies that glamorize alcohol/drug use.
- Be clear that you disapprove of underage drinking and drug use. Tell your child clearly that you don’t approve of any alcohol use until they are at least 21 years old and no other drug use ever.

## Alcohol and Drugs Harm the Developing Brain.

Alcohol and other drugs interfere with normal brain development by slowing down brain activity and growth. Research shows that youth who start drinking alcohol before the age of 15, are five times more likely to have problems with alcohol later in life, compared to someone who waits until they are 21 years old.

## Rules Matter.

Talk with your child about your family’s rules. Be clear that you want your child to be healthy and that means no alcohol until he/she is at least 21 years old (and no tobacco, marijuana or other drugs either). Set clear rules and consequences for breaking the rules and then follow through if rules are broken. Research shows that when parents have clear no-use rules and express disapproval of underage drinking (or using other drugs) youth are less likely to use.

## What You Say and Do Matters.

Be aware of the messages you send to your child about alcohol. They get mixed messages when youth are allowed a sip of alcohol for special occasions, for, example. It’s best to reinforce the no alcohol message until they are 21 years old. Children want to be like adults, and seeing parents relax and celebrate in alcohol-free ways demonstrates that adults can and do have fun without alcohol.

### For more resources visit

<https://www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking>

<https://drugfree.org/>

[drugabuse.gov](http://drugabuse.gov)

<http://med.stanford.edu/tobaccopreventiontoolkit/E-Cigs.html>