

## Nursing Needle



“Drug: ANY substance that alters perception or behavior, reducing that individual’s ability to function appropriately in the academic environment.” Have you had that “talk” with your kids about drugs yet? Most of us in the elementary level think that talk can wait. But unfortunately, it can’t. Our kids probably know more about drugs than we do. They know that “lingo”. They know what alcohol, cigarettes, Ritalin, Marijuana, Heroin, Cocaine, GHB, “X”, “DXM” and many other Illicit drugs are called and how to get high. Time to step up as parents and do what is required. Educate our children about the benefits of medications for health and the dangers of “bad” drugs.

November is National Drug Awareness Month and Whitt students celebrate the week of October 25-29 as “Red Ribbon Week” to fight off drugs. But what do our kids really know? Before you get nervous about talking to your kids, take heart, you have probably laid out the ground work for a good discussion. Medication from the doctor for an ear infection or strep throat has been given and your child was told that they needed to take this medication to feel better. Now this “teachable” moment has happened. Have it continue. You see a billboard or commercial advertising beer or cigarettes, talk about what it is, addiction, and what smoking and drinking can do to the body. Keep the conversations calm and use easy to understand terms.

As your kids grow older, begin the conversations by asking them what they think about drugs. Keep the information nonjudgemental, open-ended, and you are more likely to get an honest response. If you have hesitation from your kids, don’t push, leave the door open, allow them to think about the issue and make a date to return to the subject. News reports, for example steroid use in professional sports, can be casual starters for discussions about drugs. Use this to talk about the risks of drugs to the body and brain.

No family is immune to drugs and its effects. Some of the best kids can end up using or getting in trouble with drugs down the line. However, curiosity is usually why kids start in the first place. If you are a smoker, it is OK to talk to your kids about why you started smoking and why you don’t want your kids to start. Talk to them about the problems that they can encounter with smoking. If you drink, even socially, be a role model for your children. Demonstrate responsible drinking and never drive after drinking. Long before they have the chance to drink alcohol, you can increase the chances that they’ll just say “no”.

A warm, open family environment where kids are encouraged to talk about their feelings, where their achievements are praised, and where their self-esteem is bolstered, encourages kids to come forward with their questions and concerns. Pay attention to how your kids are feeling. Educate yourself about alcohol, nicotine, illicit drugs, and even medications that can be abused so you can be a better teacher. But remember to keep your door open and let your kids know that you are available and willing to listen in a nonjudgmental way. For more information about illicit drugs, alcohol, and nicotine and how to talk to your kids go to [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org).

Be safe and DRUG FREE. Nurse Brandon

