



Know! Your Family History and Share it

Most families are well aware and proud to point out the talents and passions that have been passed on from generation to generation (athletic ability, musical gifts, artistic skills, etc.). Most are also well aware of specific health issues that run in the family (cancer, diabetes, heart disease, etc.), and many are conscientious to not only share such information with their children, but to encourage by example, healthy behavioral choices to avoid them. But how often do people talk about their family's history of alcohol dependency? And how many of those with family history are aware of the increased risk of younger generations also developing alcohol problems?

While there are a number of factors that determine a person's risk associated with alcoholism, there is strong evidence that genetics play a role. Does that mean that the child of an alcohol dependent parent is destined to be an alcoholic? Absolutely not; but it does mean that child's risk for developing a problematic relationship with alcohol is increased.

The biological child of an alcoholic is between four to nine times more likely to develop an alcohol addiction at some point in his/her life. Whether the child is then raised by the alcohol dependent biological parent, an adoptive parent or other caregiver, his/her risk for alcoholism remains nearly the same, with about one in four children of alcoholics also developing the disease. In cases where the child's biological family history includes multiple relatives with alcoholism, the risk increases even further.

TEACHERS: For children in your classroom whose family history includes alcohol addiction, there are proactive steps you can take to help reduce their risk of also developing the disease:

Fill them in: Let them know that due to the nature of alcoholism and the fact that it is partially genetic, they are at increased risk of developing the disease.

Set the record straight: Children with a family history of alcohol problems need to know that while they may be at increased risk, they are not predestined. In the end, it comes down to the lifestyle choices they make now and down the road.

Empower them: Talk with them about ways they can reduce their risk, like delaying the onset of first use until at least age 21. Youth who chose to drink before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol problems at some point in their lives. For children with a family history of alcoholism, the risk increases even further. For some however, alcohol at any age or in any amount may never be a good option.

Talking regularly with kids about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using.

Know! urges you to encourage other parents to join Know!.

[Click here for the Know! Parent Tip Sign-Up Page.](#)

Know! is a program of:



*Lifetime Prevention
Lifetime Wellness*

Drug Free
Action Alliance
6155 Huntley Rd.
Suite H
Columbus, Ohio
43229



Link to Facebook
Page

Share expectations: Just like children without a family history of alcoholism, children with such family history need to know exactly where the important adults in their lives stand on the issue of underage drinking and that it is not taken lightly. It should also be shared that just because a parent or relative has or has had issues with alcohol, it does not give a child an excuse or permission to drink.

For additional support and resources visit: [National Association for Children of Alcoholics \(NACOA\)](#) and/or [Adult Children of Alcoholics \(ACA\)](#).

Sources: [NIAAA: COGA \(the Collaborative Study on the Genetics of Alcoholism\)](#), [NIAAA: Alcohol Alert Underage Drinking](#), [The Alcoholism Guide](#), [National Association for Children of Alcoholics \(NACOA\)](#), [Adult Children of Alcoholics \(ACA\)](#).