



## Parental Drug and Alcohol Problems

### Keeping safe

- [My Mum has a problem with drugs. Does this mean I am going to have problems or use drugs or alcohol in a harmful way too?](#)
- [How can I stay safe?](#)
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**Q. My Mum has a problem with drugs. Does this mean I am going to have problems or use drugs or alcohol in a harmful way too?**

**A.**



No. Just because you have lived in a home with harmful parental drug or alcohol use does not mean that you too will go on to have a problem with drugs or alcohol.

Being exposed to drugs and alcohol, particularly in your home, can sometimes make using them seem more 'normal'. Children look up to their parents and are supposed to get guidance and support from them to help them deal with choices around drugs and alcohol.

When people do not find a way to talk about their feelings sometimes they turn to drugs or alcohol as they think it will help them to cope with how they feel but this is a dangerous choice to make.

Having lived with a parent's drug or alcohol problems though, many young people realise that this is not something they want to get caught up in.

Try to find other adults you know who can give you good advice about making healthy choices, solving problems and managing feelings.

## Remember

Every person has to make **choices** in their life and you will have to make yours too.

***'It worries me because sometimes I think 'What if I turn out like my Mum?' But I realise I can do it, I don't need to go in my mum's footsteps.'* Rachel, 17**

You need to have clear information about drugs and alcohol and about what has happened in your family.

You need to be able to discuss your feelings with someone you trust like a family friend or a counsellor.

**Drug and alcohol use do not make painful feelings go away.**

Knowing the dangers of and being aware how you have been affected by drugs and alcohol can help you to make good decisions so that you do not develop drug or alcohol problems of your own.

## Q. How can I stay safe?

A.

- If there are drugs and alcohol around your home, do not be tempted to try them yourself. This is risky behaviour and is not taking CARE of yourself.
- Do not get involved in arguments with a parent who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Talk to someone you trust about what is happening.
- If there is conflict at home and you do not feel safe, have a safety plan for yourself. This may involve keeping family members' numbers in your phone or even the number of a local Garda or a Social Worker.
- If you are worried about how your parent is when they have taken drink or drugs and think they might need medical attention, call a neighbour or family friend. If you feel it is an emergency, call an ambulance by dialling 112 or 999.
- Keep up your own interests and work hard in school.

## Q. Where can I go for help?

A.

Sometimes teenagers choose to talk to someone in their family like an aunt, uncle or grandparent. If there is a family member who knows about the situation in your home and who you feel you can trust this can be a good place for you to start.

If you feel you would like to talk to someone outside your family, you could discuss the situation with a particular teacher you feel you can trust or an adult leader in a sports club or youth group.

There is help out there for people who want to recover from harmful drug and alcohol use. Usually the first step involves the person going to their GP who will assess their problem and suggest what treatment is available.

See **[Finding Help](#)** for places you can get more information.

