Talking to your kids about alcohol and setting boundaries can help keep them safe.

**Drinking alcohol too young.**
Drinking alcohol too young, with its potential adverse effects on the developing brain, may mean your child fails to reach their full potential – academically, creatively or on the sporting field. Alcohol can also inhibit your child’s ability to consider the consequences of their actions, leading them to take risks such as getting in fights, drink-driving, unprotected sexual activity or serious accidents.

**Alcohol as a distraction.**
Drinking alcohol can also become a negative distraction from study, sport, creative pursuits, family life and socialising – all important activities for building confidence and maturity during teenage years.

**Alcohol and the brain.**
The brain continues growing until people are in their early twenties, forming all the critical parts it needs for learning, memory, planning, emotional stability and thinking. Alcohol may disrupt this development.

**Alcohol and parties.**
Peer group pressure can be overwhelming. However, be comfortable in the knowledge that the majority of parents choose to delay their child’s introduction to alcohol, believing it is unacceptable for children under 18 to drink. It’s also interesting to note that most Australians believe that it is unacceptable for under 18s to be allowed to drink at parties.

**Kids are interested in what’s going on around them.**
Seeing how their role models use alcohol is part of this – and the most influential and trusted role model is a parent.

With that in mind, it’s important that parents shape their children’s attitude to alcohol and future drinking behaviour.

*Most Australian parents think that they should start a conversation with their kids about alcohol before they reach 12 years of age.*
Discuss the issues
Discuss the fact that not everyone drinks.
Be aware that young people are likely to have a favourable perception of the social benefits of alcohol because they believe it will help them fit in, and need to know that they can fit in without it.

Educate by example
Be a positive role model by drinking alcohol responsibly or not drinking at all.
If alcohol does play a role in your family life, talk to your child about the rules and boundaries you follow.

Listen and engage
Be aware of, and show interest in, your child’s upcoming activities and discuss these (it’s an opportunity to set clear expectations). Get to know their friends and their parents.

A good relationship
Work on developing and maintaining a good parent-child relationship based on clear and open communication.
Parent-child relationships characterised by emotional warmth and support, trust, involvement and attachment are associated with lower levels of adolescent alcohol misuse.

Your expectations
Delaying your child’s first drink requires making your expectations regarding alcohol very clear – not just to your child, but also to the other adult influencers in their lives.
Every family is different and boundaries and expectations need to be consistent with what you believe.

TIP
Highlight that not drinking is the norm for young people.

TIP
Make a point of having alcohol-free events to demonstrate that you can enjoy yourself without drinking alcohol.

TIP
Knowing the parents of your child’s friends enables you to discuss and develop a common position on things such as drinking alcohol. If other parents don’t agree with your position, at least they know your views and will be better placed to manage the situation.

TIP
Kids who feel their parents are caring, concerned and supportive start to use alcohol later and drink less. Be there to support them as hormonal changes, school commitments and peer influences build.

TIP
Involve your child in the development of rules to help them understand why they exist in the first place. They may not like the rules you set, but it is vital that they can see what your concerns are and how you hope to address them.

To get the facts and more information on how to have a conversation with your kids, visit: DrinkWise.org.au