



Spring Break – With no classes and increased freedom from masks and mandates, holiday brings more parties risks

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As families prepare to welcome back their college students during Spring Break, they must also take a moment to consider the high likelihood their kids will be faced with opportunities for drinking during their time away from dorms and classrooms.

Spring Break brings up images of parties, no doubt. As students get out for a break from the semester's work and schedules, they are also at higher risk for the many consequences of underage drinking, most especially impaired driving.

The consequences of this can be life-altering. Underage and excessive drinking leads to increased risk of immediate and long-term health damage, negative impacts to brain development, road injuries and death, and unwanted sexual encounters. Memory, coordination and critical thinking skills can all be harmed from alcohol use.

On average, three quarters of college age males will get drunk on a daily basis during Spring Break. 44 percent of college women will do the same. About half of college students will binge drink during this time, many to the point of passing out at least once during the vacation.

However, armed with the right information and plan of action, parents can take invaluable steps to prevent their kids from becoming one of these statistics. Specifically, parents should:

Maintain Open Communication – Don't hesitate to have honest, straightforward conversations with your kids where you set clear boundaries and expectations about alcohol. Parents may not believe it, but kids listen. And parents' conversations with them are actually some of the most influential and impactful.

That's why perhaps the most important thing a parent can do is simply to talk openly and honestly with kids about alcohol. They should make clear that alcohol is only safe – and legal – for responsible adults. Ultimately, when they're confronted with difficult situations, kids will remember what they talked about and will be much more likely to make smart, safe decisions.

Have a Plan of Action – If they find themselves in a difficult situation, kids need to know exactly what to do – and that anyone who has been drinking shouldn't be behind the wheel. This is a reality we want them to be prepared to face and able to make the best decisions possible. By setting a plan of

action ahead of time, they will be prepared and more confident in handling that moment when it arises.

Know Modeling Matters – It's incredibly important parents limit negative influences and behaviors around youth, even older teenagers. Kids constantly watch and take note of adults, and ultimately follow our example. Very simple awareness can make a big difference in what our kids are aware of and later repeat in their own lives.

Minimize Access – Alcohol should not be kept where it can be accessed by anyone but responsible adults. When possible, parents should consider locking it or keeping it in a clearly off-limits area. And when alcohol is kept in places where it is accessible, parents should make clear that it is off-limits to youth.

This Spring Break, many students are surely seeking a respite from rules and to let loose during a week of fun. However, arming students during this “week of no rules” with the information and tools to help them navigate situations where drinking becomes problematic can help change decisions and save lives.