

Taking risks and making choices



Adolescent Transition

Adolescent Transition Education Package | **Fact Sheet 7**

An information sheet for patients transitioning from paediatric to adult health services

As a young person there are a lot of choices that you will have to make. Some of these choices will be hard, and some will be so easy you don't realise you're making them. Decisions about things like using drugs and alcohol need to be carefully made. In addition to the usual risks faced by other young people, drugs and alcohol may have a different effect on you because of your chronic condition.

Healthy choices

FACT: Adolescence is a time to think about making healthy choices.

FACT: We can't always make healthy choices. Sometimes we take risks and make mistakes. Mistakes can be useful as we often learn more about ourselves and the world through our mistakes. This can help us make better decisions the next time.

FACT: Learning how to assess the risks of certain activities is something that people continue to do throughout their lives.

MYTH: Making healthy choices is boring and no fun!

Making healthy choices can be a very positive experience for young people. It will help you develop, discover and strengthen your identity.

For example, how about:

- Engaging in extreme physical and emotional thrills (with an expert) such as rock climbing, white water rafting, and abseiling
- Learning a new art form such as photography, dance, video, ceramics
- Talking openly with parent/carers and friends about sex and drugs
- Volunteering in your community
- Joining a gym
- Joining a team sport

Peer pressure

FACT: Peer pressure is the influence that a group can have on the decisions you make about your behaviour.

FACT: Young people who may feel alone and want to fit in undertake activities that the group is doing, even though they may not feel comfortable with these actions.

FACT: The influence that your group of friends have on you increases during adolescence; this can increase your likelihood of getting involved in risky behaviours.

MYTH: It's easier to give in to peer pressure than risk being excluded from a group of friends.

- Be confident with your decisions, even if they differ from other peoples
- Talk your choices through with someone you trust and respect. As your confidence in your choices and decisions increases you won't feel the need to do anything you don't want to
- You never know, perhaps your friends feel the same way and will be inspired by the confidence shown through your actions
- Adolescence is a time when friendship groups change as young people learn what they value in their friends

Your friendship group now could be completely different in five years time!

For more information on peer pressure:

<http://au.reachout.com/find/articles/peer-pressure>

Taking risks and making choices

Adolescent Transition Education Package | Fact Sheet 7

Drugs

FACT: Taking drugs can be risky, regardless of whether they are legal or not.

FACT: The risk of taking drugs increases if you are a young person living with a chronic medical condition.

FACT: Young people with chronic health conditions face extra risks from drugs as a result of their chronic condition or the medication they take. You shouldn't take any drugs without consulting with your doctor first.

MYTH: My friend took drugs and was ok, so I will probably be ok too.

Drugs affect different people in different ways. Just because someone you knew was ok doesn't mean you will be too.

For more information about:

Tobacco: www.oxygen.org.au/

Types of illegal drugs: www.drugs.health.gov.au/

Side-effects of drugs: <http://au.reachout.com/tough-times/alcohol-and-other-drugs>

Remember these websites give general information. They will not be specific to people with your condition. Talk to your doctor for more information.

Alcohol

FACT: Alcohol is the most common drug that a young person will come across.

FACT: Adolescence is a time of rapid growth including continued brain development. Alcohol can have a negative effect on brain development.

FACT: Consuming large amounts of alcohol increases a young person's risk of being involved in violence, being sexually assaulted, being injured in a car accident and hurting themselves.

MYTH: My friends all drink a lot at parties. I feel like I have to keep up with them to have fun.

Binge drinking (drinking more than 4-5 drinks at a time) is dangerous. If other people are drinking, there are many ways you can have fun without any alcohol or by keeping it in check. Show your friends how much fun you can have sober; be yourself, act natural, dance, chat to that attractive person you have a crush on, mingle and most importantly don't feel left out because you're not drinking. You'll have plenty of fun and be thankful that you can remember it all the next day.

For more information about:

Binge drinking: www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/ (under the health and relationships tab)

Being safe at a party: www.mynite.com.au

Alcohol and the law

FACT: It is against the law to drive with any alcohol in your system if you have a learner's or provisional driver's license.

FACT: It is against the law to sell alcohol to a person under the age of 18 years.

FACT: After tobacco, alcohol is the second biggest cause of death due to substance abuse in Australia.

MYTH: It is legal to drink alcohol over the age of 16 years.

The legal drinking age is 18 years of age. There are exceptions such as when you are in a private home with adults or having a restaurant meal with parents.

Being safe with drugs and alcohol

The best way to be safe with drugs is not to take them. You have a choice whether you use drugs or not. Do your research, know the risks and side effects. Talk to an adult you trust such as a parent, teacher, nurse or doctor about any additional risks relevant to your condition and medication use.

Find Out...

- What is the impact of drugs on young people in general?
- Does the impact change considering your condition and the medications you use?
- Is the drug addictive? If it is, will you have to keep taking it to feel 'normal'?
- Is it legal? If not, you will be breaking the law and can face harsh penalties.
- What are the short term effects?
- What are the long term effects?

For more keeping safe tips about drugs and alcohol:

www.somazone.com.au

(check the Q&A and fact sheet tabs)

Visit the Adolescent Transition website for more useful links

www.rch.org.au/transition

For more info contact:

The RCH Adolescent Transition Team on **9345 4858/4980**

or find email details and more info on www.rch.org.au/transition

The Children's

Excellence in
clinical care,
research and
education



Murdoch
Childrens
Research
Institute

