

PROM SEASON: MAKING MEMORIES, STAYING SAFE

Information from the Baltimore County Department of Health,
Bureau of Behavioral Health 410-887-3828

There is nothing like prom with its promise of glamour, fun with friends and lifelong memories. There's also nothing like prom to entice young people to engage in risky behaviors – alcohol, drugs, fast driving, unprotected sexual activity. As much as we parents want our kids to have a lifetime of wonderful prom memories, now is the time to talk with them again about smart choices so they don't end up with a lifetime of negative consequences instead.

Prom brings a flurry of activity as teens prepare for the big night. Parents enjoy sharing the excitement, but also have good reason to worry about the safety of their children.

Research has shown that the area of the brain that helps teens assess short and long term consequences is not fully developed until the mid-twenties. Therefore, prom season presents an opportunity for parents to talk with their teens about their expectations and rules. Teens need parents to be approachable and well-informed and to bring up issues such as alcohol and other drug use. In fact, parental disapproval has been shown to be a significant reason why some youth choose not to drink. The time to begin this “heart-to-heart” conversation is long before prom night.

A common concern of parents on prom night is the risk of impaired driving and the possibility of fatal outcomes. Car crashes continue to be the number one cause of death among teens. Yet, in a survey conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Association only 29% of 11th and 12th graders felt that driving impaired on prom night was highly dangerous. Students who attend after prom parties are assured an alcohol and drug free evening. Adult support is essential in planning after prom parties that successfully keep students entertained throughout the night and off the roads!

During this prom and graduation season, parents are encouraged to review the Safe and Sober Prom Season 2016 Parent Guide and Pledge book
<http://resources.baltimorecountymd.gov/Documents/Health/prombooklet.pdf>

The booklet contains information on underage drinking and drug use, young driver safety, the legal consequences of providing alcohol to minors, parenting tips, and ways parents can support the after-prom activities at their child's school. Our Pledge Book also includes the names of local limousine companies whose owners have agreed to sign the Baltimore County Safe and Sober Pledge. The Pledge states that Limousine Company employees will not allow minors to use or transport alcohol, tobacco, or any other drugs while using their transportation services.