

# Prom Safety Tips

## Overview

While your teen is preparing for the big night, it's a good idea to have some open discussions about safety issues, including driving, drinking, and post-prom parties.

- Plan ahead
- On the night of the prom

The high school prom is a milestone and an event most teenagers look forward to for months. It presents a wonderful opportunity for you as a parent to share in your child's anticipation and excitement. It's also important in the weeks before the prom to help your teenager think about important safety issues, including alcohol consumption, drug use, driving, and all-night parties. Here are some ideas to help you and your teen plan together for a fun, safe, and happy prom.

## Plan ahead

- *Participate in your teenager's prom preparations.* Go with your teen to choose a dress or tux and flowers. This is a great way to spend time with your teen during a very exciting time. It may also serve as an opportunity to start discussing prom details, such as whether there will be a post-prom party, who will be driving, and so on.
- *In the weeks before the prom, set aside time to talk with your teenager about the prom and about safety.* It's a good idea to go over all the details of the evening, from how your teen will get to the prom to exactly where he will be in the hours after it has ended. Talking to your teen ahead of time helps avoid conflicts the night of the prom.
- *Discuss what limits and guidelines you want to set with your teen.* Agree together on rules for the evening. And remember that every person is different. Some teens are more responsible than others -- even within the same family. The rules that were appropriate for your daughter two years ago may not be right for your son today. Chances are, if your teen has been responsible and trustworthy in the past, he'll be responsible and trustworthy on prom night.
- *You may choose to adjust some of your family's rules, especially about curfews, on prom night.* You might decide that it's fine for your child to stay out late as long as she checks in at determined times so you know she is safe.
- *Speak with your teen about how you expect him to behave around alcohol and drugs.* Don't assume your teenager knows how you feel about drinking alcohol and using drugs. State your views clearly. Remind your teen that underage drinking is illegal, and that possession of drugs is illegal.
- *Be sure your teenager has safe transportation for the entire evening.* If he's driving with friends, insist that one of the teens act as a designated driver who promises not to drink any alcohol or use drugs. If he and his friends are renting a limousine, will it be available for the post-prom event, too? Offer to

provide transportation if needed. Perhaps you have an older child who could help out. It's best if all of these arrangements are ironed out ahead of time.

- *Stress that under no circumstances should he get into a car with a driver who has been drinking or using drugs.* You might say, "Let's talk about who's going to drive, and what you'll do if your friends have been drinking or using drugs. It's not safe to drive with that person, even if he insists he is not intoxicated. Let's make a backup plan just in case." Even if your teenager will be driving or will be riding with someone who has agreed not to drink or take drugs, it is important to reiterate the necessity of driving defensively, especially late at night and on prom night.
- *Decide if you want to revisit discussions you've had in the past about sex and about risky behaviors.* The prom is a good time to talk again with your teenager about risky behaviors like drinking, taking drugs, sex, and unsupervised parties. Remind your teenager to try to avoid situations that could become risky. Let her know she can always call home for help.
- *Talk with your teen about peer pressure.* Many teenagers view the prom as a night without boundaries -- a perception that can lead to unsafe behavior. Remind your teen that it's important to say no to his friends if he feels what they are doing is wrong.
- *Make sure you know your teen's date or the friends she'll be going with.* Invite her friends over beforehand. Taking pictures is a good way to share in your teenager's excitement.
- *Consider holding a post-prom party at your home.* Ask your teen how she'd feel about hosting a party. Or you might get together with a group of parents and host a party jointly.
- *Have a discussion with your teen about prom expenses, and who will pay for what.* It's best to work out the details well ahead of time about who will pay for clothing, shoes, flowers, dining out, limo rental, or cab fees. Decide how much you feel comfortable contributing, and work out an arrangement with your teenager. This will help prevent friction later on. If your teen needs additional money to cover some of these expenses, perhaps he could be compensated for extra chores around the home.

### **On the night of the prom**

- *On the night of the prom, review the specifics of where your teen will be for the entire evening.* If your teen plans on attending a party before or afterwards, get the address and phone numbers of the families hosting the parties. You may want to contact them to say hello, confirm the particulars of the party, and to offer your assistance. You might offer to help with food preparation. A gesture like this can help open a dialogue about the party -- what adults will be present, and what activities are planned for the night.

- ***Remind your teen to call home if there is any change in plans.*** This includes even small changes, such as picking up an additional friend on the way to the post-prom party.
- ***If your teen plans on sleeping at a friend's house, contact the friend's parents to confirm the arrangements.*** If it makes you feel comfortable, have your teenager call you once she reaches her friend's house.
- ***If you're available on prom night, let your teen know that if he runs into trouble you'll pick him up, regardless of the time.*** If you cannot be available, try to find a friend or relative who can provide transportation if needed. If this is not an option, urge your teen to call a cab, and be sure he has cab fare.
- ***Try to stay awake until your teen returns home from the prom.*** That way, you'll be available in case there's a change in plans, or in case your teen needs last-minute transportation. Your teen will probably be too tired to share details of her evening with you when she returns home that night. Your post-prom debriefing may have to wait until the next day.

Written with the help of Wendy L. Turanski, M.Ed. in counseling psychology. Ms. Turanski has extensive experience in clinical psychology research with a focus on mood disorders and adolescence. She is a teacher certified in multiple states and has worked at educational institutions for 9 years.

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