

## Talking to Your Student about Alcohol Poisoning

In the past couple of weeks, the Contra Costa Times has reported on two cases of teens dying from alcohol poisoning with a local connection. The first involved fraternity pledges at Cal Poly and the second was a Miramonte High School student. It was just over a month ago that Northgate hosted Every 15 Minutes and parents had the opportunity to talk about drinking and driving. Now parents have another opportunity to talk with their students about the dangers of drinking.

First of all, don't be afraid to bring up this topic. Even if your student is unaware of the recent news stories, they are aware of drinking by minors. Don't feel that you need to know all the scientific facts regarding the process of alcohol poisoning. Don't get distracted by side issues – legal implications or comparisons of hard liquor versus beer.

Do emphasize that no one plans on dying as a result of alcohol poisoning. The goal is to party or have fun or get drunk, but it doesn't take much to go too far. Vomiting and hangovers are the results of a lower level of alcohol poisoning. Do emphasize safety – calling 911 will only save lives if it is done in a timely manner. Do know when to stop talking and to be sure to listen. To get the conversation started, you may wish to ask your teen:

What do you think about this student's death from alcohol poisoning?

Have they ever seen anyone at a party that looks like he/she might have alcohol poisoning and how did they react?

How will they react now that they are more aware?

How will this affect their own choices about drinking at parties?

Be sure not to reprimand your teen for drinking if he/she actually comes out and tells you that he/she does it. The point is to have an ongoing conversation about making good choices, not to have one exhaustive discussion or chastise them for past actions. In the long run, speaking with your student, rather than lecturing, is more likely to help your child develop the ability to make good decisions.