

Parent's Resource Center

Support, tools and tips from expert and parents like you



Should You Snoop?



To snoop or not to snoop? It's a controversial topic. When questioned, a wide variety of prevention and intervention experts all agree: if you suspect your child is drinking or using drugs, snooping can help keep your children safe.

The biggest hurdle in putting snooping to work to find signs of drug use might just be the use of the word snooping. It sounds so negative. So, as you move ahead in helping your child, try to shift your mindset. Instead of *snooping*, think of it as *searching* or *fact-finding*. But whatever you decide to call it, know that you are helping your child – and that's not always an easy thing to do.

The big issue for many experts is whether or not you should tell your children you're searching their room, school bag, cell phone, computers, and other technology to find signs of drug use. The answer really depends on your relationship with your child, if your child has been deceptive or lying, and your comfort level. Do what feels right for your family. Just remember: it is your home and your child. You set the rules. And, though you want to respect your child's independence and privacy, it should never be at the price of his or her health or safety.

Why Consider Searching?

Searching your child's room should be a decision you are able to defend. If you notice any change in your child's behavior, unusual odors wafting into the hallway from their room (like pot and cigarette smoke), smells to mask other smells such as incense or Lysol spray, or other **warning signs** you need to find out what's going on behind that "KEEP OUT" sign. Your child needs to understand that the limits you set with them do not stop at their bedroom door.

If you have decided not to tell your child about the search, be prepared to explain your reasons to them if she catches you mid-search. Let your child know that you are doing it out of concern for his or her health and safety. If you discover that your kid is not drinking or doing drugs, this could be a good time to find out if there's something else that may be on her mind.

Where to Look

Kids come up with some crafty places to conceal alcohol, drugs, and drug paraphernalia. Here's a short list of some possible hiding spots:

- Dresser drawers beneath or between clothes
- Desk drawers
- CD/DVD/Tape/Video cases
- Small boxes – jewelry, pencil, etc.
- Backpacks/duffle bags
- Under a bed
- In a plant, buried in the dirt
- In between books on a bookshelf
- Inside books with pages cut out

- Makeup cases – inside fake lipstick tubes or compacts
- Under a loose plank in floor boards
- Inside over-the-counter medicine containers (Tylenol, Advil, etc)
- Inside empty candy bags such as M&Ms or Skittles

Also, search your teen's cell phone speed dial list or instant message buddy lists on the computer for names you haven't heard of before. Ask your teen about any names you don't recognize.

If You Find Alcohol, Drugs or Drug Paraphernalia

Don't dance around the topic. Ask your child about the items you found.

He might try to fight back by saying your search was unfair and that you found things the wrong way by invading his privacy. Stand by your decision to search his room and ignore the argument. Your rule is NO drugs. Period.

Found a substance, but don't know what it is? Our [Drug Guide](#) may help you identify it.

For more information on what to do if your teen is using, please visit the [How to Help if They're Using](#) section.