



Reality Check! Spring Break Tips for Parents

Today's version of Spring Break is a far cry from innocent scenes of beach volleyball and sand castles. More teens than ever are putting themselves at risk during Spring Break. According to travel industry experts, an estimated one in seven (15%) young people on Spring Break party destinations are high school students. Even teens who stay at home can be at risk. Unsupervised time, money to spend, and peer pressure to "have fun" can be a recipe for risky behaviors, including drug use.

A recent report shows that more teens start using marijuana, cigarettes and alcohol for the first time between the spring and summer months – prime time for teens on Spring Break and time unsupervised by parents or teachers. Further, teen girls are more vulnerable than boys when it comes to engaging in risky behaviors.

If your teen is going an unsupervised trip – or even if your teen is staying home for Spring Break – you need to take action. Here are three things you can do to help keep your teen safe:

Spring Break Tips

1. **SET RULES, especially no alcohol or drugs**
 - Be clear and specific about your expectations and establish consequences for breaking the rules. Spring Break should not mean a break from responsibility.
 - Talk candidly about the risks of drug use and drinking, including alcohol poisoning, violence, STIs (sexually transmitted infections) and sexual assault. Include a conversation about date rape drugs like [Rohypnol](#) and [GHB](#). While usually coupled with alcoholic beverages, they can also be slipped into non-alcoholic drinks.
2. **PREPARE your teen**
 - Give teens tips on how to protect themselves, such as using a buddy system (3 or more is best) to watch out for each other, and make them aware of the laws that apply in various areas of travel.
 - Walk through different scenarios and discuss how to handle pressures, including offers of drugs or alcohol and other risky situations.
3. **KEEP MONITORING and ask questions**
 - Know your teen's itinerary and where he/she is staying.

- If they are staying home, know how they are spending their unsupervised time.
- Ask questions. Require a daily check-in via cell phone and make sure your teen is reachable. Make sure to have cell phone numbers for your teen's friends and check in with them as necessary too.
- Network with and connect with other parents to confirm plans and coordinate ground rules.

Research shows that parents are a powerful deterrent to drug or alcohol use, even when teens are far from home. The majority of teens say the greatest risk in using marijuana is upsetting their parents or losing the respect of friends and families.

Want more parenting advice? Visit the [Advice](#) section of *TheAntiDrug.com*. For more student travel safety tips, check out the [Student & Youth Travel Association of North America](#) Web site and download their "Travel Tips" brochure.

Looking for Alternative Spring Break Options?

There are organizations that offer alternative Spring Break vacations in lieu of traditional "party" travel. These trips tend to be sponsored by churches, schools or other organizations and are focused on service learning or educational travel. This year, many students are using their break to help in Katrina disaster relief efforts and other service-type vacations.

Check out these Web sites for more information on alternative Spring Break options:

- [Student & Youth Travel Association of North America](#)
- [Break Away: The Alternative Break Connection](#)
- [Habitat for Humanity](#)

Sources

Student and Youth Travel Association

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INFORMATION PROVIDED BY:

Parents: The Anti-Drug Website:

<http://www.theantidrug.com/springbreak/>