

AOD risk and protective factors for 6-11 year olds.

Many factors in life can influence a young person's risk of experiencing harms from alcohol and other drug (AOD) use.

Evidence-based parenting programs aim to delay the age at which young people begin to use AOD, or prevent it.

The programs focus on strengthening protective factors and reducing risk factors.

Risk and protective factors are influential over time, and can make a difference throughout a person's life, starting from a young age.

The table below lists AOD risk and protective factors for 6-11 year olds.

Protective factors



- a sense of belonging or connectedness to family
- proactive family problem solving
- family rituals/celebrations held and maintained
- a caring relationship even with one parent
- evidence-based drug education
- community building activities including evidence-based drug education
- positive role models, including around AOD (e.g. modelling low-risk drinking behaviours)
- sense of belonging/connectedness to school and community
- knowledge of AOD harms
- health beliefs that support healthy AOD use among parents/carers
- involvement in recreational activities.

Risk factors



- family conflict
- marital conflict
- harsh or inconsistent parenting
- child abuse and neglect
- social disadvantage
- alcohol advertising
- family history of problematic alcohol and other drug use
- AOD use in the home
- availability and accessibility of AOD in community
- childhood conduct disorders
- low performance at school

What are risk and protective factors?

Risk and protective factors help to explain why a problem exists. These factors suggest why certain individuals or groups are more or less likely to use AOD and experience harms from it.

There are many different AOD risk and protective factors, and they exist at different 'levels' (e.g. individual, family, school, society).

These factors influence people over time. For example, risk factors such as poverty and family dysfunction in childhood can contribute to the development of alcohol use later in life.

Due to this 'lifelong impact' and because some factors can be changed and modified, there are many ways that parents and families can support your children and reduce their risk, starting from a young age.

Action can start when children are young and continue throughout their lives. It's never too late or early to take action.

Action to strengthen protective factors and reduce risk factors can prevent and reduce AOD harms and is called 'AOD primary prevention'.



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Protective factors



- ✓ Reduces the chance of a person beginning to use AOD in the first place, using frequently or excessively, and experiencing harm from it
- ✓ Has a positive influence in the lives of individuals and communities
- ✓ Moderates or counters the influence of risk factors.

When we build on and strengthen protective factors, it makes people and communities strong and resilient, and protects them from AOD harm.

Protective factors for young people include a sense of belonging/connectedness to family, and parents' role modelling low-risk drinking behaviours.

Risk factors



- x Increases the chance of beginning AOD use, using frequently or excessively, and experiencing AOD harms. Exposure to risk factors does not mean a person is certain to use AOD, or develop a problem, but the chance is higher when they are exposed to several risk factors.
- x Has a negative influence in the lives of individuals and communities.

When we reduce risk factors, it makes people and communities less likely to use AOD and helps to protect them from AOD harm.

AOD risk factors for young people include family conflict and AOD use in the home.

Resources

- [AOD Primary Prevention, including Risk and Protective Factors](#)
- [AOD Risk and Protective Factors for 12-17 year olds](#)
- [Risk and Protective Factors](#) – Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

