**Talking To Patients About Substance Use**

Techniques to introduce substance use screening to determine type, quantity, and frequency of substances used

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### Normalizing

**Use universal statements**

*TRY THIS*

"I ask all of my patients about substance use to learn about their medical history" 

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### Transparency

**Establish relevance to care**

*TRY THIS*

"I would like to ask some specific questions about your substance use to understand your overall health" 

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### Permission

**Give option to refuse**

*TRY THIS*

"Would it be alright if I asked you questions about your substance use?"

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"Many patients find it difficult to talk about their substance use, but asking a few very specific questions will help me get a better picture of your health. Is it okay if I ask some questions about your substance use?"

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### How You Ask

- Ask for facts, not opinions (behavioral incidents)
- Use specific, close-ended questions
- Offer response choices on the screening tool (ex. always, sometimes, never)
- Emphasize confidentiality
- Clarify time periods (ex. past 30 days, month, year, etc.)
- Use visual aids (ex. standard drink sizes)
Work Cited: