

IS YOUR TEEN USING?



Physical Signs

- Change in sleeping patterns
- Bloodshot eyes
- Slurred or agitated speech
- Sudden or dramatic weight loss or gain
- Skin abrasions/bruises
- Neglected appearance/poor hygiene
- Sick more frequently
- Accidents or injuries

Behavioral Signs

- Hiding use; lying and covering up
- Sense that the person will "do anything" to use again regardless of consequences
- Loss of control or choice of use (drug-seeking behavior)
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Emotional instability
- Hyperactive, hyper-aggressive or depression
- Missing school or work
- Failure to fulfill responsibilities at school or work
- Complaints from teachers or co-workers
- Reports of intoxication at school or work
- Furtive or secretive behavior
- Avoiding eye contact
- Locked doors
- Going out every night
- Change in friends or peer group
- Change in clothing or appearance
- Unusual smells on clothing or breath
- Heavy use of perfumes, sprays, or incense to hide smoke or chemical odors
- Hidden stashes of alcohol

- Alcohol missing from your supply
- Prescription medicine missing
- Money missing
- Valuables missing
- Disappearances for long periods of time
- Running away
- Secretive phone calls
- Unusual containers or wrappers

If you notice unexplained changes in physical appearance or behavior, it may be a sign of substance use – or it could be a sign of another problem. You will not know definitively until a professional does a screening.

IF YOUR CHILD IS USING: HOW TO STEP IN AND HELP OUT

Intervention is not always a formal process involving drug counselors and group confrontation. Substance abuse treatment can start right at the kitchen table with a conversation. Here are 10 steps you can take right now if your child is using drugs:

- Discuss and agree to a plan of action for your child's substance abuse treatment with your spouse or his other parent or guardian.
- Pick a time to talk to your child when he or she is not high or drunk, or extremely upset or angry.
- Make it clear that you love your child, and that by bringing up substance abuse treatment you are showing your concern for his safety and well-being.
- Point out to your child that, as parents, it is your job to make sure he or she reaches adulthood as safely as possible.
- Spell out the warning signs of alcohol and drug use that you've observed in your child's behavior. Don't press the child to agree on this assessment of the problem.
- Actively listen to anything and everything your child has to say in response. The listening step is crucial, to establish empathy and to convey that you really see and hear your child. If he or she brings up related problems, they should be listened to with a promise of being addressed separately. Reiterate that what you are addressing now is substance abuse, which is serious and can be at the core of other problems.
- Then, to empower your child and get him to think about his substance use in a new way, ask him or her questions about what they want out of life and how things are going with school, his friends, his parents, siblings, job, activities, etc.
- Prompt your child to consider the link between substance use and where her life is not matching up to her dreams and wishes.
- Ask the child -- considering what he or she is concluding in this conversation about the substance abuse effect on his or her life -- to reassess the problem. Set a goal for getting well. Together, plan out some concrete steps to find information about addiction, recovery, and resources, and identify any necessary professional substance abuse treatment.
- Understand that the conversation you just had is a successful "intervention," a first concrete step toward interrupting the progression of the problem and getting well. It is a good idea to reiterate again your love and caring concern for your child. Acknowledge yourselves, knowing that you need and deserve strong encouragement and support, and have the power to solve this problem together.