

TEEN SUSTANCE ABUSE: THE WARNING SIGNS

Watch for these signs and symptoms that may indicate teen alcohol and drug abuse. A combination of several signs warrants your immediate attention.

Behavioral Signs

- An increase in erratic and drastic mood swings for no obvious reason
- Hostility and rebellion towards those in authority (parents, teachers, church, etc.)
- Stealing and shoplifting
- Unexplained increase in spending
- Little regard for personal safety and an increase in risky behavior (driving fast, etc.)
- Traffic tickets
- Vandalism
- Signs of depression
- Change in eating habits
- Promiscuous sexual behavior
- Disorientation as to time
- Memory lapse
- Cutting class at school
- Truancy and tardiness
- Decline in grades
- Involvement in fights in school
- Inability to concentrate
- Lack of motivation
- Verbal abusiveness
- Panic, paranoia, suspiciousness
- Hallucinations or loss of touch with reality
- Change in activities
- Dropping out of sports programs
- Inability to hold down an after school job
- Staying out all night
- An increase in mysterious phone calls
- Preoccupation with music promoting party and substance – abuse themes

Social Signs

- Change in circle of friends
- Suddenly becoming more popular
- Suddenly becoming a loner and separating from others
- Withdrawal from family and a dramatic increase in time spent alone at home
- Lack of communication with family
- Secretive behavior, telling family members to stay out of my business

Physiological Signs

- Disheveled appearance
- Lack of concern for personal hygiene
- Alcohol on breath
- Smell of smoke on clothing
- Smell of mints or onions on breath to cover up alcohol/marijuana odor
- Dilated pupils
- Bloodshot eyes
- Staggered speech
- Lethargy
- Long periods without sleep
- Long periods of sleep
- Sickly appearance
- Dramatic weight loss or weight gain

Obvious Signs

- Discovering drug paraphernalia (pipes, rolling paper, vials, lighters, burners, mirrors, razor blades, scales, matches, plastic bags, pills)
- Spends time with kids who are know use drugs and alcohol
- Disappearance of money or alcohol from the house
- Intoxication
- Expressed concerns about their own substance abuse problem
- Burn marks on clothing or furniture
- Needle marks
- Arrest for drug or alcohol related incidents

Signs of inhalant abuse

(Particularly prevalent among young adolescents)

- Dilated pupils
- Glazed or reddened eyes
- Sores around nose and mouth
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Slurred speech
- Violent behavior
- Chronic cough
- Nosebleeds
- Chemicals on breath
- Numbness and tingling in hands and feet
- Excessive salivation