

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF TEEN ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

Physiological signs of teen substance abuse:

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



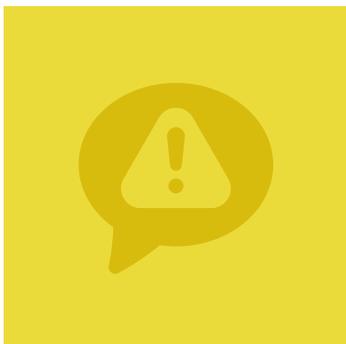
How do you know if your teen needs help?

Following are several charts listing major signs and symptoms of teen substance abuse. If you are a parent, DO NOT assume that your children are somehow immune to the pressures that lead to experimentation and addiction to drugs and alcohol. Instead, be aware of the signs so that you will know what to look for. Ignorance can be a parent's worst enemy!

If you see a few of these signs present in your teen, he or she might simply be struggling with the normal changes of adolescence. But a combination of several of these signs warrants your immediate attention. Talk with your teen and take action before addiction occurs. The presence of any of the obvious signs and symptoms is an indicator that your teen has a serious substance abuse problem that requires immediate intervention and professional help.

Social signs of teen substance abuse:

- Change in circle of friends
- Suddenly becoming more popular
- Suddenly becoming a loner and separating self from others





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Obvious signs of teen substance abuse:

- Discovering drug paraphernalia (pipes, rolling papers, vials, lighters, burners, mirrors, razor blades, scales, matches, small plastic bags, pills)
- Spending time with kids who are known to 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
- Posting or being tagged in photos showing drug/alcohol use

Behavioral signs of teen substance abuse:

- 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
- Withdrawal from family and a dramatic increase in time spent alone at home
- Disorientation as to time
- Memory lapse
- Cutting class at school
- Truancy and tardiness
- Decline in grades
- Involvement in fights
- Inability to concentrate
- Lack of motivation

- Verbal abusiveness
- Lack of communication with family
- Secretive behavior and telling family members to “stay out of my business”
- Panic, paranoia, suspiciousness
- Hallucinations or loss of touch with reality
- Change in activities
- Dropping out of sports programs
- Inability to hold down an afterschool job
- Staying out all night or sneaking out
- An increase in mysterious phone calls
- Preoccupation with music or other media that promotes substance abuse

Adapted from Walt Mueller’s book, *Youth Culture 101*.



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