

Signs & Symptoms of Teen Drug Use

How can you tell if your child is using drugs or alcohol? It is very difficult because changes in mood, attitudes, sleeping habits, friends, hobbies etc are quite normal behaviour for teens. So what should you look for?

Experts working in the drug field say that parents and caregivers should be concerned if a young person shows a **sudden** change to quite uncharacteristic behaviour or moods. Trust your intuition. If you feel something is not quite right, have a frank and open discussion about drugs and their opinion about drugs in our society. It is important to stay calm and show a willingness to listen, regardless of how concern you may be feeling.

Watch List for Parents and care:

- Changes in friends
- Personality changes (moodiness, bursts of anger, withdrawal)
- Becoming unreliable
- Cancelling appointments
- Blaming others
- Lying
- Missing meals or other family activities
- Less respect for authority
- Can't concentrate for long
- Negative changes in schoolwork, missing school, or declining grades
- Increased secrecy about possessions or activities
- Use of incense, room deodorant, or perfume to hide smoke or chemical odours
- Subtle changes in conversations with friends, e.g. more secretive, using "coded" language
- Change in clothing choices: new fascination with clothes that highlight drug use
- Increase in borrowing money
- Can't explain how they have spent their money
- Money of other family members going missing
- Lack of energy or drive
- Frequent illness (colds, flu)
- Change in sleep patterns (can't get to sleep / won't get out of bed)
- Evidence of drug paraphernalia such as pipes, rolling papers, etc.
- Evidence of use of inhalant products (such as hairspray, nail polish, correction fluid, common household products)
- Bottles of eye drops, which may be used to mask bloodshot eyes or dilated pupils
- New use of mouthwash or breath mints to cover up the smell of alcohol
- Missing prescription drugs
- Unkempt appearance
- Acne of the face