Signs & Symptoms of Drug Use

✦ ✦ ✦ *Adolescents* ✦ ✦ ✦

There is no easy way to figure out if your tween or teen is using drugs or alcohol. Many of the signs and symptoms of substance abuse can seem like typical adolescent behavior. Some of the signs can also be symptoms of mental health issues including depression and anxiety. Use this document as a resource to help differentiate between the signs and symptoms of substance abuse and typical adolescent behavior.

Physical & Health Signs

- Eyes that are bloodshot or pupils that are smaller or larger than normal
- Frequent nosebleeds
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- Sudden weight gain or loss
- Lack of energy and motivation
- Seizures without a history of epilepsy
- Deterioration in personal grooming or physical appearance
- Impaired coordination, injuries/accidents/bruises that they won't tell you about or can't tell you about because they don't know how they got hurt
- Unusual smells on breath, body or clothing
- Shakes, tremors, incoherent or slurred speech, impaired or unstable coordination

Addiction can happen at any age, but usually starts when a person is young. If someone continues to use drugs despite negative consequences, he or she may be addicted.

Psychological Signs

- Unexplained, confusing change in personality and/or attitude
- Sudden mood changes, irritability, angry outbursts or laughing at nothing
- Periods of unusual hyperactivity or agitation
- Lack of motivation; inability to focus, appears lethargic or "spaced out"
- Appears fearful, withdrawn, anxious, or paranoid, with no apparent reason

Behavioral Signs

- Skipping class, declining grades, getting into trouble at school
- Drop in attendance and performance at school or work
- Loss of interest in extracurricular activities, hobbies, sport, or exercise (decreased motivation)
- Missing money, valuables, prescription drugs, borrowing or stealing money
- Acting isolated, silent, withdrawn, engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviors
- Clashes with family values and beliefs
- Preoccupation with alcohol and drug-related music, clothing and posters
- Demanding more privacy, locking doors and avoiding eye contact
- Sudden change in relationships, friends, favorite hangouts, hobbies, etc.
- Using incense, perfume, air freshener to hide the smell of smoke or drugs
- Using eye drops to mask bloodshot eyes and dilated pupils

Most Teens Don't

Information Gathered From:
National Institute on Drug Abuse
Partnership for Drug-Free Kids
U.S. National Library of Medicine

Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition
DrugFreeJackson.com

Signs & Symptoms of Drug Use

✦ ✦ ✦ *Adults* ✦ ✦ ✦

Drug use and abuse negatively affects a person's behavior and habits as he or she becomes more dependent on the drug. The drug itself can alter the brain's ability to focus and form coherent thoughts, depending on the substance.

Below, are some of the common signs and symptoms of drug use and abuse associated with adults; however, most signs and symptoms tend to be similar regardless of age.

Physical & Health Signs

- Bloodshot or glazed eyes
- Dilated or constricted pupils
- Abrupt weight changes
- Bruises, infections, or other physical signs at the drug's entrance site on the body
- Deterioration of hygiene or physical health
- Frequent rubbing of the nose
- Puffy face, blushing or paleness
- Nausea, vomiting or excessive sweating
- Slowed or staggering walk, poor coordination

For more physical signs and symptoms view "Signs & Symptoms of Drug Use for Adolescents"

Behavioral Signs

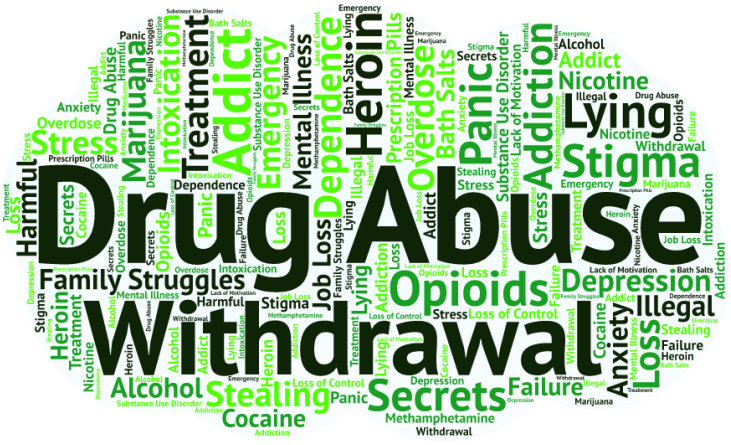
- Increased aggression or irritability
- Changes in attitude/personality
- Lethargy
- Depression
- Sudden changes in a social network
- Dramatic changes in habits and/or priorities
- Financial problems.
- Involvement in criminal activity
- Secretive or suspicious behavior
- General lack of motivation, energy, or self-esteem

For more behavioral signs and symptoms view "Signs & Symptoms of Drug Use for Adolescents"

Recognizing Drug Abuse in Family Members

Possible indications that a loved one may be using drugs include:

- **Problems at school or work** — frequently missing school or work, a sudden disinterest in school activities or work, or a drop in grades or work performance
- **Physical health issues** — lack of energy and motivation
- **Neglected appearance** — lack of interest in clothing, grooming or looks
- **Changes in behavior** — exaggerated efforts to bar family members from entering his or her room or being secretive about where he or she goes with friends; or drastic changes in behavior and in relationships with family and



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