

Wouldn't it be nice if
all of the **warning signs**
were this easy to read?



Unfortunately, it's not likely that kids will announce their experiences with drugs and alcohol, or with any harmful substances. But, parents have a responsibility to pay attention to their kid's behaviors and watch for warning signs. Prevention is the best intervention for addiction.



Signs and Symptoms

If you've noticed any of the signals related to drug abuse listed below, you may want to press your teen further and ask some important questions like: "Have you been offered drugs?" If yes, "What did you do?" or "Have you been drinking or using drugs?" Even though no parent wants to hear a "yes" response to any of these questions, be ready for it. Don't be afraid to err on the side of caution. Ask the difficult questions and decide, in advance, how you'll respond to a "yes" answer. Not all teens are going to fess up to drug or alcohol use, and sometimes the signals are masked as other behaviors. The following list can help to identify signs and symptoms to watch out for. If you find yourself responding "yes" to many of these signs and symptoms, teaming up with a professional can help to stop and redirect the course of your teen's life.



- Missing money from your purse or wallet
- Avoiding eye contact
- The use of incense, fragrance sprays, or excessive perfumes/cologne to mask the smell of smoke
- Frequently breaking curfew
- Reckless driving, car accidents, or unexplained dents in the car
- Excessive mints and/or mouthwash to cover the smell of alcohol
- Eye drops to make eyes that are bloodshot or dilated appear unimpaired
- Nosebleeds or runny noses, not caused by allergies or a cold
- Frequently sick: queasy, nauseous, vomiting
- Wetting lips or excessive thirst (known as "cotton mouth")
- Sudden or dramatic weight loss or gain
- Missing medications (over the counter and prescription)
- Over the counter materials that can be used for getting high such as computer cleanser, nail polish/nail polish remover, white out, hairsprays or other inhalants are found in personal belongings
- Increased sleeping due to depressants or decreased sleep due to stimulants
- Drug paraphernalia such as pipes, bags of seeds, rolling papers, empty bottles, baggies of pills, etc.
- Secrecy regarding activities, interactions, phone calls and/or conversations that have coded language
- Bedroom is always locked and/or strictly off limits
- Messy, shows lack of caring for appearance, poor hygiene
- Red, flushed cheeks or face
- Clenching teeth
- Track marks on arms or legs (or long sleeves in warm weather to hide marks)
- Burns or soot on fingers or lips (from "joints" or "roaches" burning down)
- Loud, obnoxious behavior or laughing at nothing
- Personality changes due to mood altering drugs
- Unusually clumsy, stumbling, lack of coordination, poor balance
- Withdrawal and decreased interactions with proper friends
- New friends/people that are not allowed to meet you or be brought home
- Truancy or loss of interest in schoolwork, sudden bad grades
- Loss of interest in extracurricular activities, hobbies, or sports

How Did They Score?

6 – 9 = Most Likely

10 – 15 = Strong Likelihood

* The result of this self-test is not designed to be used for self diagnosis or psychological evaluation.

There's no easy way to figure out if your teen is using drugs or alcohol. Many of the signs and symptoms of teen substance abuse listed above are also, at times, typical adolescent behavior. Also included are symptoms of mental health issues, including depression or anxiety disorders. But, if your teen exhibits more than 6-9 of the behaviors listed above, it's probably time to start asking the "hard" questions and getting some solid answers.



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