

## **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE IN ADOLESCENTS**

1. **Drop in grades:** Either a slow unexplainable decline or a sudden decrease.
2. **Obvious loss of initiative:** Little or no energy around activities that used to excite.
3. **Switching friends:** A new set of friends that cause parents to feel uncomfortable.
4. **Emotional highs and lows:** Easily upset; emotional state change rapidly; doesn't seem as happy or friendly as in the past...or appears "high" and overly friendly.
5. **Defiance of rules and regulations:** Pushing limits; ignoring chores; rebellious and defiant attitude.
6. **Becoming more secretive:** Refusing to disclose personal issues or problems, deception and lies.
7. **Withdrawing from family function:** An excessive desire to be "left alone"; avoiding family meals; avoiding family gatherings.
8. **Change in personal hygiene:** Excessive sloppiness; not changing clothes; failing to bathe daily.
9. **Failure to inform parents of school activities:** Requests from teachers to meet, ignored; communication about discipline problems ignored.
10. **Stays out late and begins to skip school:** Breaks curfew; cuts classes; more and more bizarre excuses.
11. **Isolating:** Spends an unusual amount of time in his/her room alone.
12. **Money missing:** From parents, brothers and sisters.
13. **Alcohol or prescription drugs disappearing.**
14. **Change in sleep patterns:** Staying up very late; sleeping excessively in school, after school and on weekends.
15. **Excessive weight loss:** In a relatively short period of time.

## What to do if you suspect your child is using alcohol or other drugs?

1. **Talk but do not accuse:** Tell your child what you have observed and express your concern. Use “I” statements instead of “you” statements. Keep calm. Express your desire for mutual communication.
2. **Listen:** Give your child an opportunity to respond. Paraphrase back what your child says to you. Do not be surprised at strong statements of denial.
3. **Discuss:** Share with your child your expectations of their behavior. State clearly your feelings about the use of alcohol and/or drugs. Tell them what the consequence will be if they use alcohol and/or drugs.
4. **Professional counseling if symptoms persist:** If signs and symptoms of alcohol and drug abuse continue, seek professional counseling.

## What to you do if you know your child is using alcohol or other drugs?

1. **Talk:** Tell your child the facts that you know. Express your deep concern. Keep calm. Express your desire to help your child deal with this problem.
2. **Listen:** Give your child an opportunity to respond. Do not be surprised at strong statements of denial.
3. **Discuss:** Regardless of the denial, repeat calmly the facts and discuss with your child the consequence that will follow.
4. **Professional counseling:** Even if the alcohol and/or drug use is in its beginning stages, it is still a good idea to seek counseling.
5. **Professional treatment:** The counselor will help you determine if a treatment program is necessary.

**CONCERN can help with adolescent drug problem.**

**513-891-1627 / 800-841-5002**

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