

## Warning Signs

The use and abuse of alcohol and drugs are serious issues that should not be ignored or minimized and we should not sit back and hope they just go away. If left untreated, use and abuse can develop into drug dependence or alcoholism. As a result, it is important to recognize the signs and symptoms of alcohol and drug abuse early. If you're worried that your son or daughter might be abusing alcohol or drugs, here are some of the warning signs to look for:

### 1. Physical and health warning signs of drug abuse

- Eyes that are bloodshot or pupils that are smaller or larger than normal.
- Frequent nosebleeds could be related to snorted drugs (meth or cocaine)
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns. Sudden weight loss or weight gain.
- Seizures without a history of epilepsy
- Deterioration in personal grooming or physical appearance.
- Impaired coordination, injuries/accidents/bruises that they won't or can't tell you about- 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.

### 2. Behavioral signs of alcohol or drug abuse

- Skipping class, declining grades, getting in trouble at school
- Drop in attendance and performance at work- loss of interest in extracurricular activities, hobbies, sports or exercise- decreased motivation
- Complaints from co-workers, supervisors, teachers or classmates
- Missing money, valuables, borrowing and stealing money
- Missing medication-both prescription and over the counter
- Acting isolated, silent, withdrawn, engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviors
- Clashes with family values and beliefs
- Preoccupation with alcohol and drug-related lifestyle in music, clothing and posters
- Demanding more privacy, locking doors and avoiding eye contact
- Sudden change in relationships, friends, favorite hangouts, and hobbies.
- Withdrawal and decreased interactions with proper friends
- New friends and people that are not allowed to meet you or be brought to the home
- Frequently getting into trouble (arguments, fights, accidents, illegal activities)
- Using incense, perfume, air freshener to hide smell of smoke or drugs
- Excessive mints, mouthwash to cover the smell of alcohol
- Using eyedrops to mask bloodshot eyes and dilated pupils
- 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 depressant drug use, or decreased sleep due to stimulants
- Eating impairments such as excess or decreased due to drugs that impair appetite
- Drug paraphernalia such as pipes, bags of seeds, rolling papers, empty bottles in the bedroom, baggies of pills etc
- Secrecy regarding activities, interactions, and conversations that have coded language
- Your child's bedroom is strictly off limits

### 3. Psychological warning signs of alcohol or drug abuse

- 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
- Personality changes due to mood altering drugs