

Common Signs and Symptoms of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse in Adolescents

Changes in Physical Appearance

- Red and/or glossy eyes, dilated pupils
- Facial color and complexion
- Dramatic Weight loss or gain
- Odor and sweating
- Neglects personal appearance
- Hair falling out in clumps

Physical Status

- Appetite Extremes
- Hyperactivity/Insomnia
- Sleepiness/Sluggishness
- Staggering
- Not being alert
- Physical Illness
- Extremes in activity and alertness
ex) alert and active one day, tired and subdued the next.

Emotional Status

- Mood Swings
- Depression
- Irritability/Anger
- Restlessness
- Belligerence
- Low self-esteem

Attitude at Home

- Isolation/Secretiveness
- Disregard household rules
- Defiant and hostile when limits are set
- Under the influence at home
- Argumentative/Extreme negativism
- Paraphernalia found
- Violent/Acting "crazy"
- Hostile when questioned about use
- Denial of problem or anything being different
- Remorse - promises to change, but doesn't
- Spend less time at home
- When at home, isolates away from family

Attitude at School

- Lack of interest in school
- Drop in grades
- Change in friends at school
- Chronic tardiness/Excessive absences
- Dropping out of sports or other activities

Chemical Use

- Frequent use and intoxication
- Hiding chemical supply
- Using chemicals in the morning
- Using chemicals at school
- Using chemicals alone

Other Behaviors

- Avoidance of contact with persons concerned about her/him
- Doesn't keep appointments
- Doesn't fulfill commitments
- Minimizes chemical use with adults
- Brags about chemical use with friends
- Involvement in arguments and fights
- Thefts and/or other illegal behavior
- Give up sports, hobbies, and other things that used to be important to him/her

Risk factors involved with adolescent substance abuse

- Family history of alcoholism or other drugs
- Family management problems
- Parental drug use and favorable attitudes toward alcohol and drug use
- Early anti-social behavior
- Early academic failures
- Rebelliousness and lack of social bonding
- Have friends who use
- Have a favorable attitude about use
- Early experimentation with chemicals
- Economic and social deprivation
- Low neighborhood attachment
- Community disorganization
- Community norms favor drug use
- Availability of drugs in community