



Signs and Symptoms of Drug Use

There is no question that "normal" adolescent moods can resemble signs of drug use. Please also note that when admitting their child to rehab, many parents report that they saw *no signs* of substance abuse. Now it is easy to get honest answers.

Signs to watch for:

1. Frequent sniffles, cough, stuffy nose.
2. Redness of eyes, dilated or constricted pupils.
3. Change in sleep patterns, such as insomnia, napping or sleeping at inappropriate times.
4. Sudden appetite, especially for sweets ("munchies"), or unexplained weight loss or loss of appetite. Refusing food, lying about eating.
5. Neglect of personal appearance, grooming.
6. Tobacco smell on person or clothes.
7. Unexplained periods or reactions of moodiness, depression, anxiety, irritability, over sensitivity, or hostility.

At home you may notice:

1. Strongly inappropriate overreaction to mild criticism or simple requests.
2. Avoids interacting and communicating with parents, withdraws from family activities.
3. Preoccupation with "self", less concern for the feelings of others.
4. Loss of interest in previously important things such as hobbies, sports, activities.
5. Loss of motivation and enthusiasm.
6. Lethargy, lack of energy and vitality. Conversely, hyperactivity can also be a symptom. Teen could be overly energetic, like cleaning all the time.
7. Loss of ability for self-discipline and assuming responsibility.
8. Change in values, ideals, beliefs.
9. Changes in friends, unwillingness to introduce friends.
10. Secretive phone calls-callers refuse to identify themselves or hang up when parents answer phone.
11. Periods of unexplained absence from home.
12. Disappearance of money or items of value from home, handling of money becomes secretive.
13. Spending too much time in their bedroom, going immediately to their bedroom.
14. Sudden, unexplained over reaction, "rages".
15. Lying.

Teachers may note:

1. Reduced short-term memory, concentration, attention span.
2. Loss of motivation, interests, does not participate in school activities.
3. Frequent tardiness and absenteeism.
4. Less interest in participating in class.
5. Sleeping in class.
6. Untidy appearance, dress, personal hygiene.
7. Slow to respond, forgetful, apathetic.
8. Increased discipline, behavioral problems.
9. Change in peer group.
10. Decline in academic performance-drop in grades.

NOTE: Drug users, and particularly chronic marijuana users, have lost the capacity to perceive many of the listed signs and symptoms in themselves.

Don't miss some of the more obvious signs:

1. Capsules, pills or tablets, cotton swabs, caps.
2. Cigarette rolling papers.
3. Pipes, pipe fittings, small screens.
4. Roach clips (sometimes look like alligators).
5. Odor of marijuana (like burnt rope) in room, on person, or on clothing.
6. Incense or room deodorizers.
7. Eye drops (Visine), mouthwash, fresh gum always on hand.

The following are some of the signs and symptoms of specific drug use:

Methamphetamines: "Wired," sleeplessness for days and weeks at a time, total loss of appetite, extreme weight loss, dilated pupils, excited, talkative, deluded sense of power, paranoia, depression, loss of control, nervousness, unusual sweating, shaking, anxiety, hallucinations, aggression, violence, dizziness, mood changes, blurred vision, mental confusion, agitation.

Cocaine: Impaired thinking, confused, anxious, depressed, short tempered, panic attacks, suspiciousness, dilated pupils, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, decreased sexual drive, restlessness, irritability, very talkative, scratching, hallucinations, paranoia.

LSD (Acid): Dilated pupils, skin discoloration, loss of coordination, false sense of power, euphoria, distortion of time and space, hallucinations, confusion, paranoia, nausea, vomiting, loss of control, anxiety, panic, helplessness, and self destructive behavior.

PCP: Sometimes violent or bizarre behavior, suicide has often occurred, paranoia, fearfulness, anxiety, aggressive or withdrawn, skin flushing, sweating, dizziness, total numbness, and impaired perceptions.

Inhalants: Short-lasting euphoria, giggling, silliness, dizziness. Then come the headaches and full-blown "faintings" or going unconscious. Longterm Use: Short-term memory loss, emotional instability, impairment of reasoning, slurred speech, clumsy staggering gait, eye flutter, tremors, hearing loss, loss of sense of smell, and escalating stages of brain atrophy. Sometimes these serious longterm effects are reversible with body detoxification and nutritional therapy; sometimes the brain damage is irreversible or only partially reversible.

Heroin: Chemically enforced euphoria. "Nodding," which is a dreamlike state, near sleep, drifting off for minutes or hours. For long time abusers heroin may act like a stimulant and they can do a normal daily

routine; however, for others, it leaves them completely powerless to do anything.

Marijuana: Compulsive eating, bloodshot red eyes that are squinty (they may have trouble keeping them open), dry mouth, excessive and uncontrollable laughter, forgetfulness, short term memory loss, extreme lethargy, delayed motor skills, occasional paranoia, hallucinations, laziness, lack of motivation, stupidity, sickly sweet smell on body, hair, and clothes, and strong mood changes and behaviors when the person is "high".

Depressants (Tranquilizers and Barbituates): Decreased inhibition, slowed motor coordination, lethargy, relaxed muscles, staggering gait, poor judgement, slow, uncertain reflexes, disorientation, and slurred speech.

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