

Signs and Symptoms of Substance Abuse in Youth

Common warning signs of drug and alcohol use:

- Change in friends
- Best friend who uses drugs
- Older friends
- Daily tobacco use
- Sudden changes in behaviour or moods
- Secretiveness, callers who hang up
- Sensitivity about privacy
- Withdrawal from family
- Loss of interest in family and school
- Drop in performance at school
- Increases or reductions in appetite
- Use of street talk or drug language

Specific signs for some common drugs:

Alcohol

- Red eyes
- Lack of co-ordination
- Slurred speech
- Alcohol on breath
- Accidents, bruises, etc.
- Morning headaches

Marijuana

- Very red eyes
- Increased appetite
- Lethargy
- Loss of concentration
- Distorted sense of time
- Poor memory

Amphetamine or Cocaine

- Dilated pupils
- Restlessness
- Rapid speech
- Repetitive behaviours
- Sleep disturbances
- May cause severe paranoia
- Runny nose
- Hallucinations
- Dilated pupils
- Rapid heart-rate
- Loss of appetite
- Insomnia
- Sensitivity to stimuli
- Extreme moods, uncontrollable laughter or panic

Some Do's and Don'ts: Talking to Your Kids about Drugs

Do

- Listen with empathy
- Ask open-ended questions
- Summarize statements
- Evoke self-statements
- Provide information in a non-judgmental way
- Roll with resistance
- Be patient

Don't

- Give orders
- Warn or threaten
- Provide the solutions
- Argue or lecture
- Criticize or blame
- Shame or ridicule
- Lie or exaggerate