

# Signs of Illicit Drug Use and Abuse

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It is sometimes difficult to tell whether or not a teen is abusing drugs or alcohol. They may just be being teens, or something else may be going on. If you suspect drug abuse, do not hesitate to seek the advice of a healthcare professional. The following signs are associated with teen drug abuse.

## Behavioral Issues

- Change in relationships
- Loss of inhibitions
- Mood changes or emotional instability
- Hostility, anger, uncooperative behavior
- Unable to speak intelligibly, slurred speech, or rapid-fire speech
- Disappearances for long periods of time
- Changing grades in school
- Deceitful or secretive

## School- or Work-Related Issues

- Truancy or loss of interest in schoolwork
- Loss of interest in extracurricular activities, hobbies, or sports
- Failure to fulfill responsibilities at school or work
- Complaints from teachers or co-workers
- Reports of intoxication at school or work

## Health Issues

- Nosebleeds
- Sores, spots around mouth
- Wetting lips or excessive thirst
- Sudden or dramatic weight loss or gain
- Skin abrasions/bruises
- Accidents or injuries
- Depression

## Personal Appearance

- Messy, shows lack of caring for appearance
- Poor hygiene
- Red, flushed cheeks or face
- Track marks on arms or legs (or long sleeves in warm weather to hide marks)
- Burns or soot on fingers or lips
- Smell of smoke or other unusual smells on breath or on clothes

## Personal Habits and Actions

- Heavy use of over-the-counter preparations to reduce eye reddening, nasal irritation, or bad breath
- Frequently breaks curfew
- Reckless driving, car accidents, or unexplained dents in the car

Source: *The Partnership for a Drug-Free America*, [www.drugfree.org/Parent/HowToSpotUse/Articles/Is\\_Your\\_Teen\\_Using.aspx](http://www.drugfree.org/Parent/HowToSpotUse/Articles/Is_Your_Teen_Using.aspx)