

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF DRUG USE



PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

1. Acting intoxicated, hallucinating
2. Redness of eyes, or droopy eyelids, dilated pupils
3. Imprecise eye movements
4. Wearing sunglasses at inappropriate times
5. Abnormally pale complexion, flushed appearance of skin
6. Change in speech patterns and vocabulary, speech impairment
7. Frequent, persistent illness, sniffles, cough, stuffy nose
8. Change in sleep patterns, such as insomnia, napping or sleeping at inappropriate times
9. Repressed physical development
10. Sudden appetite, especially for sweets (“munchies”)
11. Unexplained weight loss or loss of appetite
12. Neglect of personal appearance, grooming
13. Tobacco smell on person or clothes
14. Sudden gain in muscle mass and weight, especially among boys or athletes
15. Worsening of acne, swelling of legs and feet, puffy face, jaundice appearance
16. Persistent sneezing, nose bleeds, skin rash near mouth or nose
17. Nausea, choking or vomiting

BEHAVIOR CHANGES

1. Unexplained periods or reactions of moodiness, depression, anxiety, irritability, over sensitivity, or hostility
2. Strongly inappropriate over-reaction to mild criticism or simple requests
3. Lessening in accustomed family warmth- child avoids interacting and communicating with parents, withdraws from family activities
4. Preoccupation with ‘self’, less concern for the feelings of others
5. Loss of interest in previously important things such as hobbies, sports, activities
6. Loss of motivation and enthusiasm (amotivational syndrome)
7. Lethargy, lack of energy and vitality
8. Loss of ability for self-discipline and assuming responsibility
9. Need for instant gratification
10. Change in values, ideals, beliefs
11. Changes in friends, unwillingness to introduce friends
12. Secretive phone calls-callers refuse to identify themselves or hang up when parents answer phone
13. Periods of unexplained absence from home
14. Disappearance of money or items of value from home, handling of money becomes secretive
15. Desire for increased sensory stimuli
16. Sudden, unexplained over reaction, “rages”
17. Pre-occupation with heavy metal music, with the occult or “hemp” environmental issues

**It is important that the word possible is stressed because normal adolescent moods often resemble signs of drug use. It is also important that you be aware of any important changes in your child’s life so you can help him/her through any one of many crises these signs could indicate. In short, BE AWARE, ALERT AND COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR CHILDREN AND THE PARENTS OF YOUR CHILDRENS’ FRIENDS.

OBSERVED SCHOOL CHANGES

1. Decline in academic performance-drop in grades
2. Reduced short-term memory, concentration, attention span
3. Loss of motivation, interests, participation in school activities, energy
4. Frequent tardiness and absenteeism
5. Less interest in participating in class
6. Sleeping in class
7. Untidy appearance, dress, personal hygiene
8. Slow to respond, forgetful, apathetic
9. Increased discipline, behavioral problems
10. Change in peer group

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

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

1. Odor of marijuana (like burnt rope) in room, on person, or on clothing
2. Odor of tobacco in room, on person or clothing
3. Incense or room deodorizers
4. Eye drops (Visine), mouthwash, fresh gum
5. Finding regular or marijuana cigarettes (rolled and twisted at each end) in room
6. Capsules, pills or tablets, needles, cotton swabs, caps
7. Blotted paper with cartoon characters or strange drawings
8. Cigarette rolling papers
9. Pipes, pipe fittings, small screens
10. Roach clips (sometimes look like alligators)
11. Bongos, water pipes, usually glass or plastic
12. Scales, testing kits, hemostats and other equipment
13. Small spoons, straws, razor blades, mirrors
14. Stash cans (any type of can such as Coca-Cola, hair spray, deodorant or other can that unscrews at the bottom
15. Unfamiliar small containers or locked boxes
16. Plastic baggies or small glass vials
17. Drug-related books, magazines (High Times), comics, or clothing
18. Bags containing socks or rags having strong chemical smell

NOTE: Many of the above items can be found, usually hidden in the person's room or car. Some of the more ingenious places of concealment include the underside of drawers, between mattresses, behind light switches, inside stereos, between book pages or clothing. More obvious locations include car trunks, pocketbooks and closet shelves.

- Thanks to the National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth.