



The Realities of Drug Addiction

Teen Drug Use and Abuse

Adolescence is a critical developmental phase that involves physical, cognitive, psychological, social, and behavioral changes.



The above changes increase the risk of substance use in adolescents and can result in adverse outcomes (i.e: addiction, health problems, legal issues, etc).



The earlier teens start using substances, the greater their chances of continued use, drug abuse, addiction, and health problems later in life.

According to the Centers for Disease Control:

- ⇒ Alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco are the most common substances used by adolescents.
- ⇒ By 12th grade, about 66% of students have tried alcohol.
- ⇒ About 50% of high school students reported marijuana use.
- ⇒ About 40% of high school students reported having tried cigarettes.
- ⇒ About 15% of high school students reported using illicit or injection drugs (i.e.: cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, methamphetamines, or inhalants).
- ⇒ About 14% of high school students reported misusing prescription opioids

Dangers of Substance Use in Adolescence:



Negative Consequences of Drug Use:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Addiction: High risk for addiction● Overdose: Mixing drugs, large dose of drug, Fentanyl additive, etc● Death: Result of overdose, accidents, acts of violence, etc● Unsafe Sex: Unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases● Infections: HIV, Hepatitis B● Health Issues: Dependent on drug used | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Mental health issues: depression, apathy, suicide ideation, suicide● Poor Judgment: Increased risk for accidents● School: Poor school performance, absenteeism, drop out● Behavior: Increased risk for violence● Social: Loss of friends, social isolation● Criminal activity: Entry into the juvenile justice system |
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- Studies have shown a link between mental health disorders, drug use, and addiction. Approximately 50% of all mental health disorders start by age 14 and 75% of mental health disorders occur by age 25. Depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders are often undiagnosed, yet they could be the driving force behind drug use.
- Studies have also found that genetics account for 40-60% of an individual's risk for addiction.

Risk Factors for Substance Use:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Genetics◆ Parental substance use◆ Drugs in the home◆ Lack of parental monitoring◆ Mental health issues◆ Peer pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Association with friends who use drugs◆ Association with people who deal drugs◆ Performing poorly in school◆ Childhood abuse (physical, verbal, sexual)◆ Family non-acceptance of gender identity◆ Family non-acceptance of sexual orientation
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- The warning signs of drug use will be more obvious if you know your teen's habits, interest, and passionate activities, and hobbies.

Warning Signs of Drug Use:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Frequent change of friends◆ Withdrawal from family activities◆ Change in personality (depression, apathy, unpredictable mood changes)◆ Becomes deceitful, defiant, aggressive, secretive, and manipulative◆ Begins to steal money or items to pawn◆ Loss of interest in passionate activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Sleep changes: Sleeps a lot or very little◆ Neglects personal hygiene◆ Needle marks on arms – May wear long sleeve shirts to cover the marks◆ Begins to violate curfew◆ Skips school and/or a drop in grades◆ Pupils may be dilated or constricted; depends on what is used
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Options for Parents:

- **Communication:** Ask your teen if they are using drugs. If they acknowledge drug use, stay calm and talk to them. Be supportive, explain your concerns, and discuss treatment. Avoid yelling, belittling, punishment, or making them feel guilty. This will probably not stop the drug use and in fact may escalate it.
- **Monitor:** Monitor your teens activities. Know the who, what, where, and why of everything.
- **Privacy:** If you suspect drug use, as a parent you have the right to disregard a teen's privacy. ***Do not ignore your suspicions.*** Look for evidence of drug use (drug paraphernalia, suspicious behavior, check computer history, review text messages, etc). ***Remember, this may save their life.***
- **Seek Treatment:** Talk to your child's healthcare provider, create a treatment plan, and get your teen into treatment.



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