

# Drugs and Teens: An Overview



**Teens who use drugs face a greater risk of becoming addicted compared to adults. That's because the teen brain, which controls impulses, is still forming.**

The reasons teens use drugs can be as varied as teenagers themselves. They may include: self-medication, boredom, peer pressure, depression and social isolation.

**What every parent needs to know is that half of all new drug users are under 18.** And some of the drugs are legal substances found in the home. One out of five teens abuses prescription drugs, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

**This is a huge topic to learn about.** Here are a few tips on how to prevent your teen from experimenting with drugs and how to recognize if he or she is:

## Prevention

**Provide adequate supervision.** Knowing where and with whom your teen is spending time can decrease substance abuse.

**Enroll your teen in extracurricular activities.** Studies show that when teens engage in organized activities on a regular basis, they are less likely to use drugs.

**Address risk factors.** Students who have been abused or neglected or have a parent who used drugs are more likely to take drugs. Programs that educate teens about the effects and risks of drug use, provide mentors, or offer family counseling, can serve as deterrents.

## Detection

**Symptoms and warning signs depend on drug use.** For example, red eyes, excessive eating and lack of motivation are associated with marijuana usage while irritability, insomnia and bad acne are linked to stimulants.

**Common signs.** In most cases, your teen's personality and behavior changes, grades drop, and they may have a new circle of friends. Mood swings are severe and communication with you is strained or nonexistent.

## Treatment

**Treatment for drug addiction varies, from drug counseling and 12-step programs to family therapy.** Few medications, aside from those that treat opiate overdose and abuse, are considered effective. Teens with an advanced drug addiction may benefit from inpatient drug treatment that can last for several months followed by long-term outpatient care.

**No parent wants a son or daughter to abuse or become addicted to drugs. Learn the facts and pay attention. Abuse and addiction can start early.**

