



Substance Abuse

Warning Signs

The warning signs of substance abuse are not always obvious and there are no definitive rules for detecting problems. However, certain behaviors may provide some indication of trouble. As a first measure, be alert for:

- Drastic changes in eating habits and/or body weight
- New friendships
- New aggressive behavior
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Secretiveness or dishonesty
- Academic failure or work absenteeism
- Cash flow problems
- The presence of drug paraphernalia
- Mood shifts or changes in motivation

Note that for any adult, and particularly teenagers, some of these signs can also be caused by stress or depression related to lifestyle concerns or developmental issues. In any case, they need to be addressed, especially if they persist or if several occur simultaneously. Physical warning signs for substance abuse may also be present, such as:

- Alteration in gait
- Red or watery eyes
- Bearing the smell of any substances (including alcohol)
- Hyperactivity or excessive talkativeness
- Tremors
- Needle marks

Remember! Issues of abuse may arise from a variety of substances—illegal drugs, alcohol, prescription and over-the-counter drugs, or household products such as glue or cleaning fluid. Depending upon one’s history and level of usage, the consequences can be quite serious, and can potentially result in:

- Elevated blood pressure
- Heart rhythm problems
- Duodenal ulcers
- Liver disease
- Seizures
- Heart failure
- Brain damage

Denial is a common characteristic among substance abusers, and as a result they may not readily acknowledge other negative effects such as the impact on their families or jobs. It is important to engage and adhere to a treatment plan, however challenging that might become. Talk with your doctor, your EAP (Employee Assistance Program) representative, or call the Substance Abuse hot line in your community to assess the best care options for you or your loved ones.

Sources:
http://www.phoenixhouse.org/National/DrugFacts/drugfacts_symptoms.html



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Treatment Disclaimer: This poster is for education purposes, not for use in the treatment of medical conditions. It is based on skilled medical opinion as of the date of publication. However, medical science advances and changes rapidly. Furthermore, diagnosis and treatment are often complex and involve more than one disease process or medical issue to determine proper care. If you believe you may have a medical condition described in the poster, consult your doctor.
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