



Substance Abuse

Warning Signs

Managing substance abuse is complex because it has multiple causes that require multiple solutions. Substance abuse can be addressed both from the standpoints of prevention and treatment. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) provides an in-depth approach to preventing drug abuse among children and adolescents.¹

Substance abuse warning signs are not always obvious, and there are no surefire rules to detect them. However, changes listed below may provide some indication of trouble. As a first measure, be alert for changes in:

- Eating habits and/or body weight
- Sleep patterns
- New friendships
- New aggressive behavior
- Mood shifts or motivation
- Secretiveness or dishonesty
- Academic failure or work absenteeism
- Cash flow problems
- The presence of drug paraphernalia

Note that for adults and especially teenagers, some of these signs also can be caused by stress or depression related to lifestyle concerns or developmental issues but still need to be addressed, especially if they persist or if several occur simultaneously.

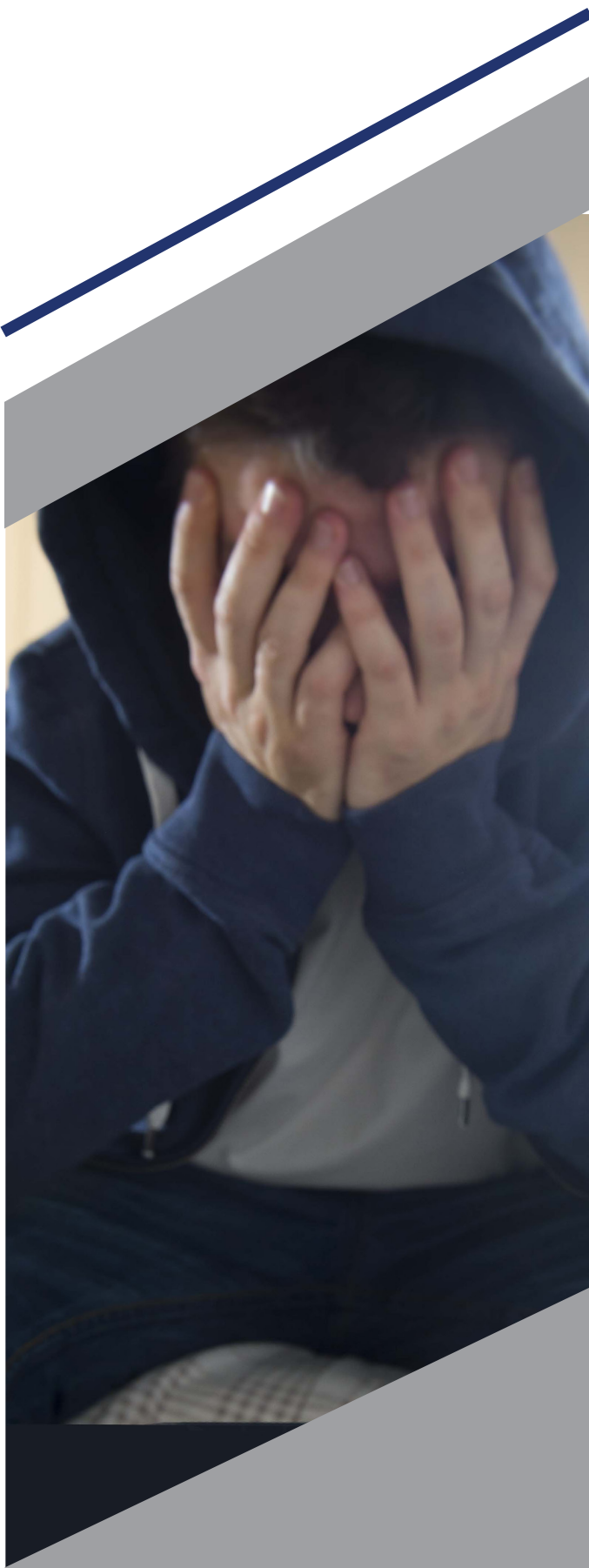
Physical warning signs for substance abuse may also be present, such as:

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

Prevention programs should address all forms of drug abuse, individual and combined, including the underage use of legal drugs (e.g., tobacco and alcohol); the use of illegal drugs (e.g., marijuana, cocaine, and heroin); and the inappropriate use of legally obtained substances (e.g., inhalants), prescription medications, over-the-counter drugs, and household products such as glue or cleaning fluid.

Depending upon one's history and level of usage, the consequences of substance abuse can be serious and potentially can result in:

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



- Substance abusers are often in denial and have trouble acknowledging the negative impact on their families and jobs.
- Talk with your doctor, a school counselor, your EAP (employee assistance program) representative, or call the substance abuse hotline in your community to assess treatment options.

¹ <<http://www.DrugAbuse.gov/Prevention/Prevopen.html>>

Source:
<http://www.PhoenixHouse.org/National/DrugFacts/DrugFactsSymptoms.html>

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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