

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DRUG ABUSE & ADDICTION

Sometimes it is tough to tell. Most people won't walk up to someone they're close to and ask for help. In fact, they will probably do everything possible to deny or hide the problem. But, there are certain warning signs that may indicate that someone is using drugs and drinking too much alcohol.

### Common signs and symptoms of drug abuse:

- Neglected responsibilities at school, work, or home (e.g. flunking classes, skipping work, neglecting your children) because of drug use.
- Using drugs under dangerous conditions or taking risks while high, such as driving while on drugs, using dirty needles, or having unprotected sex.
- Drug use is causing legal trouble, such as arrests for disorderly conduct, driving under the influence, or stealing to support a drug habit.
- Drug use is causing problems in relationships, such as fights with a partner or family members, an unhappy boss, or the loss of old friends.

### Common signs and symptoms of drug addiction:

- A drug tolerance is built up. More of the drug is needed to experience the same effect one used to attain with smaller amounts.
- Drugs are taken to avoid or relieve withdrawal symptoms. Going too long without drugs causes symptoms such as nausea, restlessness, insomnia, depression, sweating, shaking, and anxiety.
- Lost control over the drug use. Often doing drugs or using more than planned, even when promising self not to. Wants to stop using, but feels powerless.
- Life revolves around drug use. Spends a lot of time using and thinking about drugs, figuring out how to get them, and recovering from the drug's effects.
- Abandoned activities previously enjoyed, such as hobbies, sports, and socializing, because of drug use.
- Continues to use drugs, despite knowing it hurts you. Drug use causes major problems — blackouts, infections, mood swings, depression, paranoia — but uses anyway.



Unless you observe drug use or excessive drinking, it can be hard to determine the cause of these problems. Your first step is to contact a qualified alcohol and drug professional in your area who can give you further advice.

Drug and alcohol problems can affect every one of us regardless of age, sex, race, marital status, place of residence, income level, or lifestyle. Drug abusers often try to conceal their symptoms and downplay their problem. If you're worried that a friend or family member might be abusing drugs, look for the following warning signs.

### **Physical warning signs of drug abuse:**

- Bloodshot eyes, pupils larger or smaller than usual.
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns. Sudden weight loss or gain.
- Deterioration of physical appearance, personal grooming habits.
- Unusual smells on breath, body, or clothing.
- Tremors, slurred speech, or impaired coordination.

### **Behavioral signs of drug abuse:**

- Drop in attendance and performance at work or school.
- Unexplained need for money or financial problems. May borrow or steal to get it.
- Engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviors.
- Sudden change in friends, favorite hangouts, and hobbies.
- Frequently getting into trouble (fights, accidents, illegal activities).

### **Psychological warning signs of drug abuse:**

- Unexplained change in personality or attitude.
- Sudden mood swings, irritability, or angry outbursts.
- Periods of unusual hyperactivity, agitation, or giddiness.
- Lack of motivation; appears lethargic or "spaced out."
- Appears fearful, anxious, or paranoid, with no reason.

*Based on: Drug Abuse and Addiction: Signs, Symptoms, and Help for Drug Problems and Substance Abuse* [www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org)