

NATIONAL DRUG COUNCIL



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SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF SUBSTANCE USE AND ABUSE

ONE NATION – ONE VOICE – ONE CHOICE – DRUG FREE

HOW TO KNOW IF A YOUNG PERSON IS TAKING DRUGS

With the widespread abuse of drugs among today's youth, many parents wonder if their child or someone else they know is taking drugs. Although it is impossible to always be 100 percent accurate, there are some signs and symptoms of drug use that are extremely reliable. Parents can use these to obtain a "high index of suspicion."

For purposes of discussion, "youth" refers to anyone between the ages of 13 and 19 years old. When the term "drug" is used, it refers to the illegal drugs: marijuana, cocaine, PCP, heroin, etc. It does not refer to alcohol, nicotine, or caffeine.

WHY IT IS SO DIFFICULT TO RECOGNISE DRUG ABUSE

- Parents may have great difficulty in recognising when a youth is taking drugs because they are confused about what are "acute" and what are "chronic" drug effects.
 - Acute drug effects are those that result from recent, usually within a few hours, ingestion of a drug. Drinking Too much alcohol causes obvious symptoms that we all recognise: slurred speech and a staggering gait. The drugs that are commonly used by youth may not cause obvious signs of intoxication. Therefore, acute drug use signs require explanation. Recognition of acute signs of drug use can be extremely helpful in identifying early use.
 - Parents, teachers, coaches, and other persons not educated in drug abuse identification will usually not suspect drug use until it is chronic (continuing for a long time).
 - Symptoms that cause suspicion are usually due to the effects of long-term drug use. The major long-term effects that cause one to be suspicious are those that affect the internal time clock of the brain and those that affect motivation.
 - A third way to confirm drug use is to identify drug paraphernalia and other evidence relating to the actual mechanism as to how the drug is used. For example using "rizla paper" and cocaine may be sniffed from a small spoon.
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DRUG PARAPHERNALIA

What is drug paraphernalia?

- This is the equipment used for taking drugs; this can include anything from cigarette papers 'skins', 'rizlars' for rolling a 'joint' to smoke ganja to a soft drink can to smoke crack cocaine.
- There are many different illegal drugs. There are also legal products that you can buy such as Deodorant cans (aerosols) that if abused can be extremely harmful and illegal.
- There is not just one kind of drug paraphernalia, like there is not just one drug. People take different drugs in different ways.

- Drug users tend to use household items as paraphernalia such as: -
 - **Spoons** - they will be discoloured and have a burnt look if they have been used for this purpose. This may be used for burning heroin.
 - **Safety pins** - they will also be discoloured and have a burnt look. Safety pins can be used for burning ganja.
 - **Tin foil** - this may have holes in and have a burnt appearance.
 - **Soft drink cans** – this may be used for smoking crack cocaine.
 - **Chip bags** - this will be used when inhaling solvents such as glue.
- **Pipes** - may be used for smoking ganja.
- **Plastic bottles with the bottom cut off** - this may be used for smoking ganja, it's called a 'bong'.
- **Mirror, razor/credit card and straw/rolled paper note** - this may be used for cocaine.
- **Needles and syringes** - used for injecting intravenous drugs such Heroin.

People who misuse drugs may use other household items as paraphernalia. The above are the most common.

PICTURES OF DRUG PARAPHERNALIA

Bong



Needle/Syringe



Razor/credit card and straw/rolled paper note



Soft drink cans



Rolling papers "rizla"



HOW CAN YOU TELL IF SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS A PROBLEM WITH ALCOHOL AND OR DRUGS

At times it's tough to tell. If someone has one or more of the following signs, he or she may have a problem with drugs or alcohol:

- Secretive behavior regarding actions or possessions; poorly concealed attempts to avoid attention and suspicion such as frequent trips to closets, restrooms, storage rooms, basements (to use drugs).
- Irrational behaviour often bordering on paranoia.
- Getting in trouble with the law.
- Unusual flare-ups or outbreaks of temper or unusual depression.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS THAT AN INDIVIDUAL USING MARIJUANA

The signs that an individual is using marijuana includes but is not limited to:

- Seem dizzy and have trouble walking.
- Seem silly and giggly for no reason.
- Have very red, bloodshot eyes.
- Have a hard time remembering things that just happened.
- Signs of drugs and drug paraphernalia, including pipes and rolling papers.
- Odor on clothes and in the bedroom.
- Clothing, posters, jewelry, etc., promoting drug use.
- Use of incense and other deodorizers.
- Use of eye drops.

3 KEY INDICATORS

- Deterioration of physical appearance and grooming.
- Unable to cope with stress and frustration.
- Frequent “reddish” eyes, frequent puffy and/or droopy eyelids (Constantly wears sunglasses).

CLOTHING, POSTERS, JEWELRY, PROMOTING DRUG USE



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO GET HELP CONTACT

National Drug Council 949-9000

Department of Counselling Services 949-8789

The Wellness Centre 949-9355

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