

Signs and Symptoms of Drug Use

The following signs and symptoms do not always mean that a child is using drugs. They may signify depression or difficulty dealing with stress. Regardless of the cause, these signs merit attention and possibly referral to a mental health professional, especially if they occur in clusters or if they persist.

Behavioral Signs

- Changes in attitude, personality, or values
- Changes in friends
- Loss of interest in hobbies, activities
- Giddiness/silliness
- Change of habits
- Difficulty paying attention
- Moodiness
- Unusual secretiveness or reclusiveness
- Changes in school performance
- Carelessness with grooming and hygiene
- Withdrawal from family and former friends

Physical Signs

- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Poor physical coordination
- Red, watery eyes
- Pupils larger or smaller than usual
- Flushed, pale or puffy face
- Smell of drug on breath, body or clothes
- Nausea, vomiting
- Chronic runny nose or coughing
- Shaking hands
- Extreme fatigue
- Weight loss or gain

Drug-Specific Symptoms

Alcohol (including beer, wine, wine coolers, and liquor):

Slurred speech, poor coordination, poor judgment, drowsiness, dilated pupils

Tobacco/Nicotine (including cigarettes, cigars, dip, or chewing tobacco):

Smell of tobacco, stained teeth or fingers

Marijuana:

Sweet, burnt smell; glassy, red eyes; loud talking and inappropriate laughter; craving for sweets; weight gain or loss

Inhalants (including glues, aerosols and solvents):

Seems drunk but with chemical smell; watery eyes, runny nose, rashes around mouth or nose; blurred vision, memory and thinking; headaches; nausea; poor muscle control; drowsiness; anxiety, irritability, poor appetite; an unusual number of spray cans in trash

Hallucinogens (including LSD, psilocybin mushrooms, peyote):

Bizarre, irrational behavior including paranoia, aggression, hallucinations; confusion; dilated pupils, slurred speech, detachment from others; unusual absorption with self or objects

Depressants (including barbiturates and tranquilizers):

Seems drunk without the smell of alcohol; slurred speech, poor coordination, poor judgment, drowsiness, difficulty walking, contracted pupils