



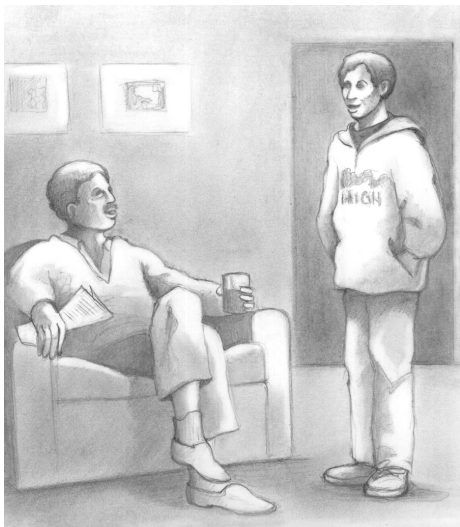
TEENS

Drinking & Drugs

Most parents are concerned about how their children will deal with alcohol and other drugs. Some parents believe that it's less dangerous for their children to use alcohol. The truth is, alcohol is a drug and it's the drug of choice for most teens. By educating yourself, you can help your teenager cope wisely with decisions about drug use.

Why Teens Use Drugs

Teenagers use drugs for many reasons, but their first notions about it may come from the behavior of their own family. To help prevent teenage drug abuse, parents need to provide teens with plenty of love, good communication and calm, consistent standards about drug and alcohol use. Even then, teens feel pressure to fit in with their peers. They may be influenced by stories that make it seem like "everyone drinks or takes other drugs." Adolescence is often a confusing time. Some teens use drugs in order to escape from unpleasant emotions or feel more confident—particularly if they often feel shy or insecure about how they look and act.



Parents' habits often influence their children's decisions about drugs. Consistency, moderation and choices calmly based on the effects of drug use are the best example.

Could Your Teen Be Using?

Here are some symptoms to watch for if you believe your teenager may be using drugs:

- discipline problems, constant arguing, lying, stealing and irresponsibility
- isolation, secrecy and less involvement in family activities
- new interests or friends, especially older friends
- bad grades or poor school attendance
- hyperactivity, drowsiness or forgetfulness
- depression or mood swings
- change in speaking patterns
- weight gain or loss, junk-food cravings
- bloodshot eyes, use of eyedrops or incense, runny nose or coughing
- odd, small containers in pockets or purse
- money problems
- alcohol, drugs or possessions disappearing from the house
- drug paraphernalia, such as pipes, papers and razor blades
- needle marks
- tremors
- hallucinations or delusions

What You Can Do

Here are some steps you can take if you believe your teenager has a drug or drinking problem:

- Learn more about alcohol, other drugs and dependency.
- Find out about drug treatment programs available to your teen and your family.
- At a time when you can remain calm, and your teen is sober, talk calmly and honestly about the changes you see, and about the harmful consequences of drug abuse. Talk about seeking treatment together.
- Take good care of yourself. Get plenty of rest. Eat properly and exercise.
- Talk with other parents and join a support group.