

## Signs and Symptoms Be Alert.

You want your kids to be healthy and drug-free. But many parents find it difficult to spot signs of drug use, especially since many of the signs and symptoms listed below are common in perfectly normal adolescents. While there is no single warning sign for drug or alcohol use, some indicators of a potential problem include:

- ❖ Drop in school attendance or academic performance
- ❖ Lack of interest in personal appearance
- ❖ Physical change (e.g., persistent runny nose, red eyes, coughing, wheezing, bruises, needle marks)
- ❖ Uncharacteristic withdrawal from family, friends or interests
- ❖ Isolation, depression, fatigue
- ❖ Hostility and lack of cooperativeness
- ❖ Increase in borrowing money
- ❖ Unaccounted-for cash, especially in small denominations
- ❖ Change in friends
- ❖ Loss of interest in hobbies and/or sports that used to be important
- ❖ Change in eating/sleeping habits
- ❖ Evidence of drugs or drug paraphernalia (e.g., rolling papers, eye drops, butane lighters, pipes)
- ❖ Use of incense or room deodorant
- ❖ Evidence of inhaling products (such as hairspray, nail polish and white-out) and chemicals used to get high (e.g., rags soaked in chemicals or gasoline, smell of chemicals on the person, more frequent need to buy household products)
- ❖ Smell of alcohol on the breath or sudden, frequent use of breath mints
- ❖ Watered-down alcohol in liquor bottles in the liquor cabinet
- ❖ Sudden use of strong perfume or cologne
- ❖ Heightened secrecy about actions or possessions

If you suspect that your child is using drugs, take action. Ask your child whether he or she is taking drugs, and if you are unsure of whether you'll get an honest answer, figure out a way to find out if drugs are being used. You've got to talk on an ongoing basis.

While you should be open and ready to receive the information that your child will give you, you should also continue to establish a zero tolerance for drug use and then set clear expectations. If you need help, contact your child's school counselor, family physician or pediatrician or call the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 1-800-788-2800 for drug abuse prevention information and a listing of the treatment centers closest to you. You may also visit the Web site at [www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov).

**Resource: National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign**