



## Take Action

When you suspect your child may be using alcohol and/or drugs, it is important to take action.

### Prepare Yourself

Work with what happened rather than why it happened. Don't blame someone else, yourself or your child. Don't be shocked or judgmental because there are many innovative ways to conceal use. Don't be afraid and/or hesitate to investigate your son/daughter's belongings such as cell phones, computers, etc.

### Confront the Issue

Don't let anger or fear overwhelm your effectiveness in dealing with your child. Cool down or take a walk before you begin the conversation.

### Have a Conversation

Putting your head in the sand is counter-productive. Accept that your son/daughter may be using so that you can begin the conversation.

### Set Standards

Take a stand. Say "NO" clearly and firmly. Carry through on consequences.

### Ask For Help

There are many confidential resources available for parents—if you ask! Ask your school health professional for help or seek assistance from a mental health or substance abuse counselor.

The following organizations offer information and resources that can help you and your family.



**1-877-8-HOPENY**

Find Help for **1-877-846-7369**  
Alcoholism, Drug Abuse, Problem Gambling

**New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services**

[www.oasas.ny.gov](http://www.oasas.ny.gov)  
518-473-3460

**The Partnership at Drugfree.org**

[www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)  
855-378-4373

**Al-Anon and Alateen**

[www.al-anon.alateen.org](http://www.al-anon.alateen.org)  
757-563-1600

**SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment**

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)  
240-276-1660

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services**

877-SAMHSA-7

**National Institute on Drug Abuse**

[www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)  
800-662-HELP

**National Council on Alcohol & Drug Dependence**

[www.ncadd.org](http://www.ncadd.org)  
800-NCACALL



## How to Know?

I think my child is using alcohol and/or drugs

## Signs And Symptoms

Any one of the following behaviors can be a symptom of normal adolescence. However, keep in mind that the key is change. It is important to note any significant changes in your child's physical appearance, personality, attitude or behavior.

### Physical Signs

- Loss or increase in appetite; unexplained weight loss or gain
- Inability to sleep or unusual laziness
- Smell of substance on breath or clothes
- Nausea, vomiting, sweating, shakes of hands, feet or head
- Red, watery eyes; pupils larger or smaller than usual; blank stare, thick tongue, slurred speech

### Behavioral Signs

- Change in attitude/personality
- Change in friends; new hangouts
- Change in activities, hobbies or sports
- Drop in grades or work performance
- Isolation and secretive behavior
- Moodiness, irritability, nervousness, giddiness

## Facts

There is no greater influence on a young person's decisions about alcohol or drug use than his/her own parents or guardians. To successfully keep kids drug-free, parents must provide active support and positive role-modeling.

Parents are key in preventing underage drinking and drug use. Be a parent, not a friend. Establish boundaries that take a clear stand against alcohol and other drug use.

Current brain research shows that the brain is not fully developed until the mid-twenties. Adding chemicals to a developing brain is a very risky endeavor—and one that can lead to health problems and places kids at high risk for addiction, even death.

## Widely Used Drugs

Prescription Painkillers

Marijuana

Alcohol

Tobacco

## Why Teens Use

### Acceptance

To fit in with friends, to become popular or be where the action is.

### Curiosity

Youth hear about "highs" and want to find out for themselves.

### Easy Access

If pills, alcohol or other drugs are easy to obtain, they are more likely to experiment.

### Modeling

When parents or older siblings use alcohol, drugs and/or tobacco, youth are more likely to try.

### Self-medication

To cope with pressures of problems or as an antidote to deal with issues.

### Seeking independence

Some students believe using is a way of self-expression and a way to test their individuality.

