

# Teens, Drinking & Drugs

Most parents are concerned about how their children will deal with pressures to use alcohol or other drugs. Some parents believe that it is less dangerous for their children to use alcohol. The truth is, alcohol is a drug, and it is the drug of choice for most teens. By educating yourself about teens drinking and using drugs, 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 them from abusing drugs, parents need to provide teens with plenty of love, good communication and calm and consistent standards about drug and alcohol use. Even then, teens feel a need to fit in with their peers. They may be influenced by ads and news stories which imply that everyone drinks or takes other drugs. Adolescence is a confusing time at best. 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.

## 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 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 eye drops 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 of the steps you can take if you believe your teenager has a drug or drinking problem:

- √ Lean 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.
- √ Do not shield your teen from the effects of drug abuse.
- √ Take good care of yourself. Get plenty of rest. Eat properly and exercise.
- √ Talk with other parents and join a support group.