

Be Alert

WARNING SIGNS OF DRUG USE

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
- Isolation, depression, fatigue
- Hostility and lack of cooperativeness
- Physical changes (e.g., persistent runny nose, red eyes, coughing, wheezing, bruises, needle marks)
- Increase in borrowing money
- Unaccounted for cash, especially in small denominations
- Uncharacteristic withdrawal from family, friends or interests
- Change in friends
- Loss of interest in hobbies and/or sports that used to be important
- Smell of alcohol on the breath or sudden, frequent use of breath mints

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- Sudden use of strong perfume or cologne
- Change in eating/sleeping habits
- Change in clothing choices – new fascination with clothes that highlight drug use
- Evidence of drugs or drug paraphernalia (e.g., rolling papers, eye drops, butane lighters, pipes)
- Use of incense or room deodorant
- Watered-down alcohol in liquor bottles in the liquor cabinet
- Missing prescription drugs – especially narcotics and mood stabilizers
- Heightened secrecy about actions or possessions
- Subtle changes in conversations with friends, e.g., more secretive, using “coded” language
- 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)

Sources: *Keeping Your Kids Drug-Free: A How-To Guide for Parents and Caregivers*; *Suspect Your Teen is Using Drugs or Drinking?* Parents. The Anti-Drug. www.TheAntiDrug.com

For more information contact Idaho RADAR Network Center, 1-800-93RADAR or hs.boisestate.edu/RADAR

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