



PARENTS USE YOUR POWER

April 2017

86%
respect their
friend's
choice to be
marijuana-free
(30 day data)

**Conversation
Starter of the
month—
“If you could
change some-
thing in your
life, what
would it be?”**

**FACTS &
STATS
FAQ's
RESOURCES**

**PREVENTION
EDUCATION
INTERVENTION
TREATMENT
RECOVERY**



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I know or think my teen might be using—What can I do?

Teens experiment with drugs for many different reasons. They may first try drugs out of curiosity, to have a good time, because friends are doing it, in an effort to improve athletic performance or to ease another problem, such as stress, anxiety or depression. Use doesn't automatically lead to abuse, and there is no specific point at which drug use moves from casual to more problematic. An essential component of drug abuse is the reason people turn to drugs in the first place. We know postponing first use is critical because the earlier use begins, the more likely it can lead to addiction/chemical dependency.

As with many other conditions and diseases, vulnerability to addiction differs from person to person. Genetic disposition, mental health, family and social environment all play a role in addiction. Risk factors that increase vulnerability include:

- Family history of addiction
- Abuse, neglect or other traumatic experiences
- Mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety
- Early use of drugs
- Method of administration—smoking or injecting a drug may increase its addictive potential.

Addiction is a complex disorder characterized by compulsive drug use. While each drug produces different physical effects, all abused substances share one thing in common: repeated use can alter the way the brain functions. Use of a recreational drug causes a rush of the hormone dopamine in your brain, which triggers feelings of pleasure. Your brain remembers these feelings and wants them repeated.

Changes in the brain interfere with one's ability to think clearly, exercise good judgement, control behavior, and feel normal without drugs. The urge to use is so strong that the mind finds ways to rationalize the addiction.

Discovering that your teen uses drugs can generate fear, confusion and anger. It is important to remain calm when confronting your teen, and to only do so when everyone is sober. Explain your concerns and make clear that your concern comes from a place of love. It is important that your teen feels you are supportive.

While experimenting with drugs doesn't automatically lead to drug abuse, early use is a risk factor for developing more serious drug use, abuse and addiction. It is important [to have a plan](#) to address experimentation. Send a clear message that drug use is not ok. [Risk of drug abuse also increases greatly during times of transition](#), such as changing schools, moving, or divorce. The challenge for parents is to distinguish between the normal, ups and downs of the teen years and the [red flags of substance abuse](#).

Some signs of substance abuse:

- ⇒ Changes in sleep habits
- ⇒ Having bloodshot eyes, dilated or pinpoint pupils,
- ⇒ Skipping class, declining grades, suddenly getting into trouble at school
- ⇒ Missing money, valuables, or prescriptions
- ⇒ Acting uncharacteristically isolated, withdrawn, angry or depressed
- ⇒ Dropping one group of friends for another, being secretive about the new peers
- ⇒ Loss of interest in old hobbies, lying about new interests and activities
- ⇒ Demanding more privacy, locking doors, avoiding eye contact, being secretive
- ⇒ Not wanting to participate in family activities

Parent Tips:

- ♦ **Encourage other interests and social activities.** Expose your teen to healthy hobbies and activities, such as sports and afterschool clubs.
- ♦ **Lay down rules and consequences.** Your teen should understand that using drugs comes with specific consequences. Don't make hollow threats or set rules that you cannot enforce. Make sure all adults in the home agree with the rules and are prepared to enforce them.
- ♦ **Talk to your teen about underlying issues.** Drug use can be the result of other problems. Is your teen having trouble fitting in? Has there been a recent major change, like a move or divorce causing stress?
- ♦ **Monitor your teen's activity.** Know where your teen goes and who he or she hangs out with. It's also important to routinely check potential hiding places for drugs—in backpacks, between books on a shelf, in DVD cases or make-up cases. Explain to your teen that this lack of privacy is because it is a parent's responsibility to keep teens safe.
- ♦ **Get help.** Teenagers often rebel against their parents but if they hear the same information from a different authority figure, they may be more inclined to listen. Try a school social worker or nurse, a family doctor, or therapist. [See the Power of Choice resource page for more ideas.](#)

Source: April 2016 survey of 11,774 District 203 and 204 High School students. A project of 360 Youth Services, Naperville School District 203, Indian Prairie School District 204, Naperville Police Department, KidsMatter and District 203 & 204 parents. Funding in whole or in part by the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

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