



Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula®
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES
Clint Eastwood Youth Program



Tips for spotting drug/alcohol use

As a parent, you pay attention and stay “one step ahead” of your teen, especially regarding drug/alcohol use. Perhaps you lecture and set up rules to keep your children out of harm’s way. Unfortunately, these efforts don’t always work.

Many parents know what drug/alcohol use looks like, but many do not. Some of the signs may be more obvious than others. And some of the signs are difficult to separate from “normal” adolescent behavior. When you see indicators and you find drug or alcohol “clues”, your concern alarm should be ringing.

Possible behavioral or physical indicators

- changes in personality/mood
- secretive behaviors
- a drop in grades, interests, extracurricular activities, or “normal” activities
- dropping old friends; hanging with new friends, especially friends you don’t know or who are involved with drugs/alcohol
- slurred speech or difficulty expressing thoughts
- lack of coordination, poor balance
- red eyes, bloodshot eyes, or flushed face
- headaches, nausea, weakness, or sweatiness
- the odor of alcohol on breath or in sweat; a sweet, pungent odor in hair or on clothing
- sudden appetite, or “the munchies”
- frequent wetting of lips or excessive thirst (“cotton mouth”)
- jumpy, nervous behavior; restlessness; excessive talking; rapid speech
- pupils dilated (enlarged) in a well-lit room
- runny nose or bloody nose without a cold or other illness
- insomnia
- periods of high energy followed by long sleep or exhaustion
- poor attention span

Obvious drug clues

- paraphernalia, drugs, and/or money that “belongs to a friend”
- rolling papers, dried plant material with a musky odor, seeds
- pipes, tubes, tin cans, or other smoking apparatus (often with a sticky or dried brownish residue)
- unexplained pills or capsules, white powder
- razor blades, glass vials, straws, rolled dollar bills, empty pen barrels
- syringes, needle marks on body
- blotter paper squares or stickers (possibly wrapped in foil)
- the odor of gas, glue, or other petroleum products
- full aerosol containers with the gas propellant missing
- bottles of alcoholic beverages
- drug-related posters, drawings, or sayings

Isn't experimentation just a phase?

How can you tell if your teen's just experimenting or there's something more serious going on? Experimentation, especially when linked with other factors — life stress, peer pressure, school problems, easy availability of drugs/ alcohol, trauma, family problems, and/or a family history of addiction — may result in ongoing alcohol/drug use. Most teens have used for several years before their parents become aware of the extent of their use. Don't assume your teen's drug or alcohol use is “a normal phase” and “nothing to worry about.”

Get to know the typical drugs of abuse, what their effects are, and what your adolescent is likely to look like if using one of these drugs. Be informed. Talk with your child if you are concerned. Take action. If you need help, we're here.

This information is brought to you by Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula's Clint Eastwood Youth Program, providing a structured program to treat drug and alcohol abuse as well as mental health problems.

For more information or to schedule a free screening, please call **373-0924** or **800-528-8080**

