

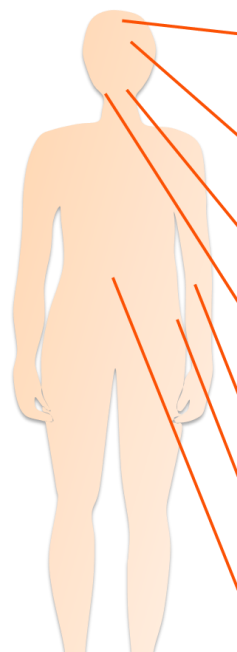
Identifying drug use and taking action

Many families do not recognize the signs of drug use and do not know how to respond when they see the signs.

Physical signs

- At beginning, sick with vague symptoms 1 – 2 times a week
- Drastic weight changes – up or down
- Changes in eating habits – amounts, items, times
- Inconsistent sleeping habits
- Balance and coordination issues
- Smells – more obvious with marijuana and alcohol and less obvious with pills, cocaine and heroin
- Lack of attention to personal hygiene
- Lethargy – common with downers (Rx painkillers – Oxycontin or Norco, anti-anxiety medications (benzodiazepines – Xanax, Klonopin)

- Items to look for**
- Drugs or pills – that are not prescribed by a doctor
 - Torn, folded scraps of paper (used to package drugs)
 - Bottle caps or spoons (used to cook heroin)
 - Tiny cotton balls (used to filter heroin)
 - Small pieces of tin foil (used to smoke heroin)



- Mental issues**
 - Forgetfulness and memory deficits – short term or long term
 - Mood swings
- Abnormal pupils**
 - Enlarged pupils if using ecstasy/MDMA, benzodiazepines
 - Tiny/pinprick pupils if using opioids
- Change in speech patterns** – words used, rapid or slurred speech
- Clenching jaws or chewing**
 - Common with stimulants (cocaine, Adderall, ecstasy/MDMA)
- Needle marks/track marks** – On arms, hands, legs, neck, in between fingers and toes (or anywhere a vein can be accessed)
- Physical pains and aches** – common to develop back and joint pain with opioid use
- Stomach issues: vomiting, nausea, general pain**
 - Common with opioids as they erode the stomach lining
 - Common sign of withdrawal

Behavioral signs

- Spending money has increased – can be consistent or drastic
- Valuables or money missing from home of friends/family
- New drugs or items show up
- Changes in grades, cutting classes, truancy, missing tests and assignments, missing activities
- Changes in friends, hanging out with new people/group
- Distancing self from old or long-term friends
- Unwillingness to introduce you to new friends
- Lying
- Loss of job or dismissal from other activities (sports team or club)
- Car accidents
- Minor arrests
- Having friends who are in substance abuse treatment
- Complaints of bullying
- Feeling like they do not fit in
- Doctor prescribed medications taken for mental health issues are no longer working

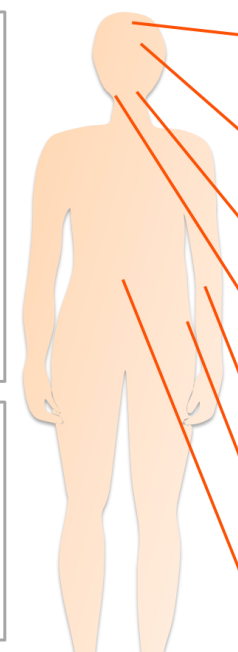
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How to react

- **Do not panic**
- **Avoid over-questioning**
- **Do not yell at them!** Express concern and love from a place of compassion not aggression
- **Keep an open dialogue with your loved one**
- **Do not continually search their room** – it is a waste of time! You will not find what they do not want you to find
- **Do not violate their privacy** by hacking onto their personal online pages – this will result in distrust and disrupt any change of an open dialogue
- **Never question their friends or your friends**

Actions you can take

For your loved one

- **Reach out** to an addiction specialist, such as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker
- **Punishment does not work** – they may need professional help and they definitely need your support
- **Never give them cash**—if they need food or clothes, you can choose to buy it for them and remove the tags
- Inform school counselors of your concerns and ask their advice
- Offer unconditional help including **counseling or treatment**
- Understand that **forcing them into treatment will not work**—they need to be ready
- Keep home drug tests available
- **Dispose** of old prescription pain pills
- If it turns out your loved one is not using drugs, do not be afraid to admit you were wrong

For yourself

- **Take care of yourself** and the rest of your family
- **Get help for yourself** and other family members by attending a local support group
- **Seek support** from a mental health professional if feeling overwhelmed or depressed
- **Remove old prescriptions** from your house
- **Recognize** that no one wants to be an addict and addiction is a disease
- **Do not blame yourself** for their drug use or their refusal to enter treatment
- **Do not care** what other people might think – it is your issue to deal with

Addictions hotline

(716) 831-7007

24 hour

Support · Link to treatment · Referral



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