

Warning Signs of Drug Abuse and Addiction



Recovery Road Ministries

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Information Provided by Indian Health Service.gov

Drug abusers often try to hide their symptoms and downplay their problem. If you're worried that a friend or family member may be abusing drugs, look for the following warning signs:

Physical warning signs of drug abuse

- Bloodshot eyes, pupils larger or smaller than usual
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- Deterioration of physical appearance, personal grooming habits
- Runny nose or sniffing
- Sudden weight loss or weight
- Tremors, slurred speech, or impaired coordination
- Unusual odors on breath, body, or clothing

Behavioral warning signs of drug abuse

- Using causes difficulties in one's relationships
- Engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviors
- Frequently getting into legal trouble, including fights, accidents, illegal activities, and driving under the influence
- Neglecting responsibilities at work, school, or home, including neglecting one's children
- Sudden change in friends, favorite hangouts, and hobbies
- Unexplained need for money or financial problems. May borrow or steal money.
- Using drugs under dangerous conditions (driving while using drugs, using dirty needles, having unprotected sex)

- Increased drug tolerance (the need to use more of the drug to experience the same effects one used to achieve with smaller amounts)
- Using drugs to avoid or relieve withdrawal symptoms (nausea, restlessness, insomnia, depression, sweating, shaking, anxiety)
- Loss of control over drug use (using more than intended, unable to stop)
- Life revolves around drug use (always thinking of using, figuring how to get more, or recovering from use)
- Abandoning enjoyable activities (hobbies, sports, and socializing) to use drugs
- Continuing to use regardless of negative consequences (blackouts, infections, mood swings, depression, paranoia)

Psychological warning signs of drug abuse

- Appearing fearful, anxious, or paranoid, with no reason
- Lack of motivation; appearing tired or "spaced out"
- Periods of unusual increased energy, nervousness, or instability
- Sudden mood swings, increased irritability, or angry outbursts
- Unexplained change in personality or attitude

Adapted from: [HelpGuide.org](https://www.helpguide.org)

Warning Signs of Commonly Abused Drugs

Signs of addiction or abuse often depend what substance is being used. If you suspect someone you know may be addicted to substances, and one or more of these addiction signs are present, you can locate treatment options for detox and rehabilitation with **SAMHSA's National Helpline - 1-800-662-HELP (4357)** SAMHSA's National Helpline is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders.

Depressants (including Xanax, Valium, GHB): Contracted pupils; drunk-like; difficulty concentrating; clumsiness; poor judgment; slurred speech; sleepiness.

Inhalants (glues, aerosols, vapors): Watery eyes; impaired vision, memory and thought; secretions from the nose or rashes around the nose and mouth; headaches and nausea; appearance of intoxication; drowsiness; poor muscle control; changes in appetite; anxiety; irritability; lots of cans/aerosols in the trash.

Hallucinogens (LSD, PCP): Dilated pupils; bizarre and irrational behavior including paranoia, aggression, hallucinations; mood swings; detachment from people; absorption with self or other objects, slurred speech; confusion.

Heroin: Contracted pupils; no response of pupils to light; needle marks; sleeping at unusual times; sweating; vomiting; coughing, sniffing; twitching; loss of appetite.

Marijuana: Glassy, red eyes; loud talking, inappropriate laughter followed by sleepiness; loss of interest, motivation; weight gain or loss.

Stimulants (including amphetamines, cocaine, crystal meth): Dilated pupils; hyperactivity; euphoria; irritability; anxiety; excessive talking followed by depression or excessive sleeping at odd times; may go long periods of time without eating or sleeping; weight loss; dry mouth and nose

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<https://www.ihs.gov/asap/information/warningsignsdrug/>