



Talk Early And Often About Alcohol, Tobacco And Other Drugs. Even When It Gets Tough

Parent Tip

Know! About the Drug Increase in Middle Schools and Signs of Use

According to the newly released *National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XV: Teens and Parents*, there has been a 39% increase (since last year) of tween exposure to drugs in school. **One in three middle school students are now reporting drugs being used, kept or sold on their school grounds.**

Would you know if your child was drinking, smoking or using other drugs? Would you know the difference between typical tween behavior and warning signs for risky tween behavior? A sudden temper outburst, change in attitude or shift in sleeping habits may be just another day for your child, on the other hand, it could be a red flag. Determining what is "normal" and what is not is sometimes the biggest challenge for parents.

Here are just a few warning signs of possible substance use:

Friends and Family: new set of friends (but not necessarily bringing them around), using "coded" language with friends, negative change in family relationships

Personal Appearance: decrease in hygiene, no longer cares about appearance, drastic change in types of preferred clothing or wearing clothes that highlight drug use

Behavior: breaking curfew often, locking doors/increased secrecy, loss of inhibitions, significant weight gain or loss, avoiding eye contact, cash flow problems, new use of mouthwash or mints to cover up smell of alcohol or smoke on breath, new use of room deodorizer or perfume to hide smoke or chemical odors in the house or on clothes, new use of eye drops, sleeping more or sleeping less

School Performance: school truancy, loss of interest in school (or after-school activities), decrease in grades, complaints from teachers

Health: lack of balance (falls or other injuries), red, flushed face, clenching teeth, excessive thirst, track marks, burn marks or abrasions on skin, nosebleeds, sores around mouth, seizures, depression, extreme happiness, emotional outbursts

Evidence: any type of drug paraphernalia, inhalant products, missing prescription meds, etc.

It is also important not to compare one child to another (not even a sibling) when deciding if there are potential signs of use. If you suspect your child may be using alcohol, tobacco, marijuana or other drugs, you will need to come up with a plan and swiftly take action. The next Know! Parent Tip will address how to do just that. In the meantime, visit TimeToAct.DrugFree.org for immediate intervention steps.

Sources: CASA: *National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XV: Teens and Parents, Aug 2010. Partnership for a Drug-Free America : Signs Someone is Using Drugs or Alcohol.*

Talking regularly with kids reduces their risk of using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Know! urges you to encourage other parents to join Know! by taking the [Parent and Caregiver Pledge](#). For more information log on to www.HelpThemKnow.com or call 1-866-999-KNOW.

Know! is a program of:



Drug-Free Action Alliance
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