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DON'T WALK AWAY

[www.itsuptoyou.org](http://www.itsuptoyou.org)

## Is Your Child Using Drugs? How to Find Out

**T**he mood swings and unpredictable behavior of the tween and teen years often make it hard to tell if a child is using drugs--but there are warning signs you can watch out for. If your child exhibits one or more of these behaviors or moods, drugs may be a part of his or her life:

- ◆ Withdrawn, depressed, tired, or careless about personal grooming
- ◆ Hostile, uncooperative, and frequently breaks curfews
- ◆ Relationships with family members have deteriorated
- ◆ Hangs around with a new group of friends
- ◆ Grades have slipped and school attendance is irregular
- ◆ Loss of interest in hobbies, sports, and other favorite activities
- ◆ Change in eating and sleeping patterns
- ◆ Has a hard time concentrating
- ◆ Red eyes or runny nose without allergy problems or a cold
- ◆ Household money has been disappearing
- ◆ You have found any of the following in your home: pipes or water pipes/bongs (including homemade), rolling papers, small medicine bottles, eye drops, or butane lighters

Some of these indicators can be caused by emotional problems or physical illness. Discuss the possibility with your child's doctor and, if necessary, take your child in for a physical exam. If illness is not the problem, it's time to choose a course of action.

### How to Help Prevent Your Child from Using Drugs

1. Be your kids' greatest fan. Compliment them on all of their efforts, the strength of their character, and their individuality.
2. Get your kids involved in adult-supervised after-school activities. Find out what activities are available for your child.
3. Help your kids develop coping skills they can use to get out of alcohol or drug-related situations. Let them know they can use you as an excuse: "My mom would kill me if I drank a beer!"
4. Know your children's friends and their parents. Set appointments for yourself to call them and check-in. Steer your kids away from any friends who use drugs.
5. Call kids' parents if their home is to be used for a party. Make sure that the party will be alcohol/drug-free and supervised by adults.
6. Set curfews and enforce them. Let kids know the consequences of breaking curfew.
7. Encourage open dialogue with your children about their experiences. Make sure they understand they can ask you anything and that you'll give them an honest answer.
8. Set a no-use rule for alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
9. Sit down for dinner with your children at least once a week. Use the time to talk—don't eat in front of the TV.
10. Get--and stay--involved in your children's lives.

*Excerpted from [www.drugfreeamerica.org](http://www.drugfreeamerica.org), September 2002.*