

Neighbourhood Support

New Zealand



Phone 0800 4NEIGHBOURS

Phone 0800 463 444

www.ns.org.nz

Neighbourhood Support Fact Sheet

Signs and Symptoms of Drug Use in Young People

Some of the signs and symptoms listed here are also quite normal behaviour for young people and need not be related to drug use. Experts working in the drug field say that parents and caregivers should be concerned if a young person shows a **sudden** change to quite uncharacteristic behaviour or moods.

Trust your intuition. If you feel something is **not** quite right, have a frank and open discussion about drugs and the young person's opinion about drugs in our society. It is important to stay calm and show a willingness to listen regardless of how concerned you may be feeling. If you are confrontational the young person is likely to clam-up, say nothing, and turn more towards their peers and drugs for comfort. Respecting a young person's voicing of their "peers" opinions may well give you a better insight into their own position regarding drug and alcohol use and abuse.

Possible behavioural signs and symptoms of general drug use

- Personality changes (moodiness, bursts of anger, withdrawal)
- Getting frustrated quickly (restless, agitated, aggressive)
- Becoming unreliable
- Behaving in an unexpected way
- Cancelled appointments
- Blaming others
- Secrecy
- Lying
- Missing meals or other family activities
- Attitudes to things change
- Absence from school, especially after a weekend
- Wagging school
- Less respect for authority
- Sudden changes in school interest and achievement
- Changes in sporting interest and achievement
- Altered or delayed emotional development
- Lack of energy or drive
- Inability to get out of bed in the morning
- Not up front about friends and where they have been
- A sudden change in friends
- Money of other family members starts disappearing
- Can't explain how they have spent their money
- Frequent illness (colds, flu)
- Can't concentrate for long
- Less aware or less common sense (especially while intoxicated)
- Unable to sleep

Bruises (due to nutritional deficit or accidents while intoxicated)
Abrasions (due to accidents)
Unkempt appearance
Acne of the face
General tiredness and listlessness
Staggering walk (intoxicated)
Slurred speech (intoxicated)

This information was provided by the D.A.R.E. Foundation of New Zealand. Parents and caregivers can learn more about drugs and issues regarding young people by visiting www.dare.org.nz or attending a [Dare to Support Your Kids](#) programme.

If you are concerned about your own or someone else's drinking or drug use, you can free phone The Alcohol and Drug Helpline on 0800 787 797 daily between 10am and 10pm. They offer confidential information, advice and a referral service. Further information about alcohol and drugs can be obtained from the [Alcohol Drug Association](#).