

# TEEN DRUG ABUSE

SIGNS, SYMPTOMS & TREATMENT



# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>What is Teen Drug Abuse?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Commonly Abused Drugs by Teens and Adolescents</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Signs of Drug Abuse in Teens</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Treatment for Teen Drug Abuse</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Inpatient Rehab</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Outpatient Rehab</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Article Resources</b>	<b>6</b>

# Introduction

***\*Teens who are addicted to chemical substances must detox before their enrollment at Shepherds Hill Academy. Our facilities do not provide detox services.***

Although it is something most parents don't want to think about, teen drug abuse is an unfortunate reality in this country. Many adolescents are introduced to drugs and alcohol at a young age because these substances are often easy to acquire, either from peers or family members. In fact, according to the [Advanced Recovery Systems](#), almost half of high school students know a classmate who sells drugs. Additionally, 86 percent of high-school aged students know a person who drinks, smokes, or takes drugs during the school day.

While these stats are somewhat alarming, the reality stands true. But just because a teen has tried drugs, doesn't mean they are abusing them. Before worrying that your teen might be abusing drugs, you need to understand the difference between drug abuse and addiction.

## What Is Teen Drug Abuse?

Many people use the terms addiction or dependency interchangeably with abuse, but they are not the same thing. Substance abuse comes before addiction. A teen who is abusing drugs is consistently using them for recreational purposes. This habit can interfere with daily responsibilities or lead the user to neglect normal responsibilities. In the stage of abuse, the teen chooses to use the substance, even if it negatively affects his or her life.

Addiction, on the other hand, is when a person has become dependent on a chemical. When someone abuses a drug for long enough, their body may start to require it to maintain consistency. This becomes less of a choice and more of a need, as not having the next dose may cause withdrawal symptoms. To put it in simpler terms, an adolescent can abuse drugs without having an addiction, but ongoing drug abuse can lead to teen addiction.

## Commonly Abused Drugs by Teens and Adolescents

If you think your child might be abusing drugs, there are a few initial steps you should take to investigate the situation before making accusations. After all, if a teenager feels attacked, they may be less likely to confide in you and consider getting help. As you expand your awareness of their habits and activities, be on the lookout for paraphernalia of specific common substances:

- **Amphetamines (meth):** A stimulant drug that is extremely addictive. It can be smoked, snorted, injected, or swallowed. Meth paraphernalia includes small glass pipes and syringes.

- **Hallucinogens:** A variety of drugs (including LSD, mushrooms, peyote, and ketamine) that alter perception and enhance certain feelings, often causing hallucinations. They can be eaten, inhaled, swallowed, injected, snorted, or dissolved in the mouth. Paraphernalia associated with this class of drugs includes blotted paper, sugar cubes, gelatin, and orange tablets.
- **Heroin:** An opioid-based drug that has mind-altering effects and generally causes the user to feel happily relaxed. It can be injected, smoked, or snorted. Paraphernalia of heroin includes syringes, burned/melted spoons, foil, cotton balls, lighters, straws, and cigarette papers.
- **Prescription pain killers:** Another opioid that gives a “high” feeling and numbs away pain. These come in pill form and are generally swallowed, but some abusers crush them up and snort them. Paraphernalia for prescription drugs includes a collection of pharmacy pill bottles, small baggies, powder residue on flat surfaces, and hollowed-out pens.
- **Marijuana:** Dried leaves from the Cannabis plant, which contain THC, a drug delivering mind-altering and relaxing effects. It’s usually inhaled, but can also be eaten. Paraphernalia of marijuana includes pipes, bong, cigarette paper, cigar paper, and vaporizers.
- **Inhalants:** Chemicals ingested from common household items that create a “high” feeling. These are usually inhaled by sniffing fumes, spraying aerosol products into the mouth, or huffing a rag soaked with an inhalant. Paraphernalia of inhalants includes plastic or paper bags, bandanas, aerosol products, balloons, cotton balls, and soda cans.
- **Steroids:** Man Made chemicals created to increase testosterone in the body, which may help someone bulk up. Steroids are taken either orally or by injection. Paraphernalia includes syringes, foil packets, plastic containers, ointment, or stick-on patches.
- **Cold medicine:** Standard cough and cold medicine have DXM, a mind-altering chemical that can produce a euphoric feeling if taken in high doses. This is usually taken by drinking the liquid syrup. Paraphernalia of DXM abuse includes a collection of cold- and cough-medicine bottles.
- **Alcohol:** A easily-available substance that causes the drinker to feel intoxicated and lose inhibitions. [Alcohol](#) is ingested by drinking it. Paraphernalia of alcohol includes empty bottles, flasks, dark cups with lids, and thermoses.

## Signs of Drug Abuse in Teens

Whether they know it and don’t want to admit it to adults or simply don’t think there is a problem, a teen dealing with drug abuse may not come forward and ask for help. If teen addiction or substance abuse are issues, however, treatment needs to be a priority. As a parent, it’s important to be aware of your child’s habits so you can look for signs of drug use in teens:

- **Changes in Behavior:** Curfew violations, sudden change in friends, withdrawal from family activities, lack of motivation, and impulsive or dangerous behavior
- **Changes in Mood:** [Depression](#), aggression, irritability, and severe mood swings
- **Physical Changes:** Bloodshot eyes, dilated pupils, sudden weight loss/gain, lack of personal hygiene, nosebleeds, shakes or tremors, flushed cheeks, bruises/other unexplained injuries, and [drowsiness or fatigue](#)

Keep in mind, one or two of these signs may not indicate a teen drug abuse issue. Certain activities or actions are normal for those in their adolescence, so before assuming the worst, make sure you are seeing several of these changes in your child. If possible, try to talk to your teen about what is going on and give them the opportunity to tell you if they are having an issue with substances.

## Treatment for Teen Drug Abuse

If you have spoken with your teen or figured out they may be abusing drugs, it's important to get treatment as soon as possible. Getting them appropriate care as soon as you recognize the problem can make a huge difference in the outcome. Depending on the frequency of abuse and how long the drug has been used, there are a couple of treatment options available.

### Inpatient Rehab

Seeking out inpatient rehabilitation might be the best course of action if your teen is showing signs of drug addiction. In an inpatient program, your child will be monitored during the detox process and provided care within a treatment facility, away from home. This type of rehab usually lasts at least a month, and along with monitoring the withdrawal, usually provides counseling, group therapy, medication management, and a community for your teen to lean on. Inpatient care is usually recommended for more severe cases of teen drug addiction.

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### Outpatient Programs

If your teen is low-risk, hasn't developed a dependency yet, or has already participated in inpatient treatment, outpatient rehab is the likely option. This allows your child to stay at home while attending therapy sessions, counseling, classes and seminars, and substance abuse support groups, as well as getting psychiatric treatment for co-occurring conditions. Outpatient programs are usually focused on relapse prevention and incorporate family members and friends in creating an ongoing recovery plan.

Not every teen will try drugs, and even fewer will start to abuse them, but being aware of the signs and knowing what's available to your child is an important piece of preventing teen drug abuse. If you have concerns about your kid's school or the crowd he or she is surrounded by, consider a different education option. Shepherds Hill Academy can pull your teen from the challenges of public school and peer pressure by creating a home for them at our therapeutic boarding facility.

Attendance at Shepherds Hill is also a great option for [teens coming out of rehabilitation](#), as it provides a safe, social environment for them to continue their schooling and improvements in behavior. [Contact us](#) today to discuss how we can help your troubled teen with residential academic care.

## Article Resources:

- Drug Facts, (n.d.), *National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens*, Retrieved from: <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts>
- Shahid Ali, MD, Charles P. Mouton, MD, Shagufta Jabeen, MD, Ejike Kingsley Ofoemezie, MD, Rhan K. Bailey, MD, Madiha Shahid, MS, and Qiang Zeng, MD, December 8, 2011, *The National Center for Biotechnology Information*, Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3257983/>
- How to Identify Drug Paraphernalia, Last updated: June 28, 2017, *Get Smart About Drugs*, Retrieved from: <https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/content/how-identify-drug-paraphernalia>
- Principles of Adolescent Substance Use Disorder Treatment: A Research-Based Guide, January 2014, *Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens*, Retrieved from: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/principles-adolescent-substance-use-disorder-treatment-research-based-guide/evidence-based-approaches-to-treating-adolescent-substance-use-disorders>
- What to Do If Your Teen or Young Adult Has a Problem with Drugs, January 2016, *Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens*, Retrieved from: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/treatment/what-to-do-if-your-teen-or-young-adult-has-problem-drugs>
- Inpatient VS outpatient rehab, (n.d.), *The Recovery Village*, Retrieved from: <https://www.teenrehabcenter.org/rehab/inpatient-vs-outpatient/>