

DRUG AWARENESS

YOUTH REFERENCE GUIDE



Millions of people have a problem with alcohol and illicit drugs. These problems are not only common, but can happen to anyone. People struggling with drugs are individuals who come from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds. The best way to protect yourself is to know the *truth* about drugs. What would you do to protect yourself from the effects of drugs?

The following are the most common questions youths have about drugs.

WHAT IS DRUG ADDICTION?

Drug addiction is a complex brain disease characterized by compulsive, uncontrollable drug craving that persists even when knowing the extremely negative consequences. Addiction becomes compulsive due to the effects of prolonged drug use on brain functions and behavior.

HOW QUICKLY DO YOU BECOME ADDICTED?

There is no easy answer. If and how quickly addiction develops depends on the drug and factors like individual sensitivity, genetics and biology. While one person may use a drug many times and suffer no ill effects, another person may be vulnerable and overdose with first use. All drug abuse is potentially harmful and has life-threatening consequences.

I'M NOT SURE I CAN TALK TO MY PARENTS...

One of the hardest things is to admit you might have a problem. Don't be scared. Breach the subject in an easy manner. No matter what you think, your parents care about you and your well-being. If you can't talk with them, try a school counselor, clergy, family doctor, older relative, close friend's parent or a teen help hotline. Someone can provide solid advice and another point of view. Most young people report feeling better after "spilling their guts" to someone.

CAN DRUG USERS GET HELP?

Definitely! But first, they must admit there might be a problem and they want help so **THEY** can do the work to kick the habit. People do not have to hit "rock bottom" before successfully getting help. They must recognize the need for change. It's not impossible to get clean on your own, but it's easier with support.

FOR EMERGENCIES, CALL 911

IS MY FRIEND OUT OF CONTROL?

Most users are secretive about their dependency and it's hard to tell. Watch for any of the following signs:

- ◇ Gets drunk or high on drugs on a regular basis
- ◇ Lies about the amount of drugs they use
- ◇ Avoids you to get drunk or high alone
- ◇ Stops activities that were a big part of their life (sports, homework, or hanging out)
- ◇ Constantly talks about and plans drinking or drug use in advance
- ◇ Must drink or use more drugs to get the same high
- ◇ Doesn't have "fun" unless drunk or stoned
- ◇ Has lots of hangovers and "blackouts"
- ◇ Is withdrawn, depressed, tired, and cares little about personal appearance
- ◇ Rapid weight loss and changed sleeping patterns
- ◇ Has difficulty concentrating
- ◇ Red-rimmed eyes or runny nose not related to cold or allergies
- ◇ Pressures others to drink or use drugs
- ◇ Feels run-down, hopeless, depressed or suicidal
- ◇ Doesn't care about others
- ◇ Gets in trouble with the police
- ◇ Drives while under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- ◇ Gets suspended from school for drug-related problems

Research resources:

www.checkyourself.com & www.drugfree.org

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National Drug Awareness Resources:

www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com

-U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency

www.drugfreeamerica.org

-Partnership for a Drug Free America

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