

Adolescence is a time for trying new things, including *experimenting* with drugs and alcohol. Teens use alcohol and drugs for many reasons. However, the age of *first exposure* is decreasing with the *average age* of first marijuana use at 14 and alcohol use before age 12. If two or more of the following are evident in your child, call **HelpPeople** with questions or make an appointment to discuss your concerns.

- If there is a *family history* of substance abuse or alcoholism (including “problem drinking”) on either side of your child’s family. This includes *immediate and extended* family members; problems can skip generations.
- Decreased interest in responsibilities at home, work or school. *Breaking curfew*, missing work, dropping out of activities or sports.
- *Increasingly* negative behaviors or attitude such as irritability, dishonesty, disrespect of authority and possibly violence toward others.
- Spending less time at home, when home, *isolating* from family members.
- *Peer group changes*, usually to people parents don’t know or are not allowed to meet.

Adolescent Substance Abuse Tips for Parents

- Ensure your child understands your position on use. Talk before problems arise.
- Set clear limits and expectations regarding curfews, parties and friends.
- Trust your feelings. If you suspect your child is experimenting or using drugs or alcohol-ASK!
- Realize you are your child’s first and most important role model-set an appropriate example.
- Discuss a plan should they or their ride be unable to drive home safely. Ensure they know to call home for a ride and their safety comes first.
- Check out “overnights”-make sure your child is there, along with parents.
- Understand that “field parties” can be an opportunity to use.
- Check that family members’ prescriptions are not being used by others.
- Be aware and explain the use and danger of “date rape” drugs. Any drink in a public place should be monitored at all times; most of these drugs are odorless, tasteless and colorless.