

# SUBSTANCE ABUSE

## What is Substance Use?

Substance use is the consumption of alcohol or drugs. It is illegal for individuals under the age of 21 to use alcohol or illegal drugs. If you are in the position that you want to help someone, please know the differences between substance abuse, addiction and dependency. Substance use comes with the risk that it might lead to addiction.

## Useful Websites & Phone Numbers

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**  
1-800-662-HELP (4357)  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

**StarVista Crisis Center and Teen Chatroom**  
(650) 579-0350  
[www.onyourmind.net](http://www.onyourmind.net)

**Crisis Text Line**  
Text HOME to 741741 in the US for FREE 24/7 crisis support.  
[www.crisistextline.org](http://www.crisistextline.org)

## What is Substance Abuse?

Substance abuse is the consumption of alcohol or drugs, despite the fact that drinking these substances or using these drugs cause issues in their life. The issues caused by abuse may be related to their job, their personal life, or even safety.

## What is Addiction?

Addiction is a need to keep using and an inability to stop using substances despite harmful consequences. People with addiction (severe substance use disorder) have an intense focus on using a certain substance, such as alcohol or drugs, to the point that it takes over their lives.

## How to Help Someone Who Has Substance Issues?

- Offer a listening ear and let your friend know that they are not alone
- Acknowledge their situation, be supportive, and listen non-judgmentally
- Tell them to talk to a trusted adult- a doctor, therapist or school counselor, a family member, teacher, coach about their concerns and how they are feeling. It is okay to go with them



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dedicated to changing the way young  
people think about mental health issues.

### How to Know When You or a Friend Needs Help?

- **Alcohol:** Many adolescents drink alcohol. It is important to notice when drinking becomes a problem that may lead to abuse, addiction, or dependency. Alcohol is a depressant that can disrupt many body processes, thoughts, feelings, and actions— and sometimes your long-term mental health.
- **Tobacco/E-cigarettes:** E-cigarettes, including vaping, juuling, and battery-operated devices usually contain nicotine, flavorings, and other chemicals. Research shows that early use increases the risk for nicotine addiction.
- **Marijuana:** Many teenagers try marijuana and some use it regularly. Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug in the United States. Recent discussions and public debate are leading to a reduced perception of harm among young people. Some teens believe marijuana cannot be harmful because it is “natural;” however, regular marijuana use in teens can lead to long-term consequences.
- **Prescription drugs:** Prescription drugs are misused by taking someone else’s medication, taking a medication other than what has been prescribed, taking a medication to get high, or mixing it with other drugs. Prescription drugs are the fastest-growing drug problem in the United States, and impact teens’ mental and physical health.

### How Do You Know When You or a Friend Needs Help?

Certain symptoms and behaviors are warning signs for problems with substance use in teens:

- Alcohol, smoke, or other odors on breath or clothing
- Obvious intoxication, dizziness, or bizarre behavior
- Changes in dress and grooming
- Changes in choice of friends
- Frequent arguments or sudden mood changes
- Changes in eating and sleeping patterns
- Sudden weight gain or loss
- Loss of interest in usual activities or hobbies
- School problems
- Trauma or frequent injuries
- Runaway and delinquent behavior
- Depressed mood or talk about depression or suicide; suicide attempts

### Additional Behaviors

Additional behaviors that may become problematic are relationships to food, all things technology including social media and gaming, and exercise.

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