

Drugs

■ Trying drugs

Experimentation during adolescence is common. Unfortunately, teenagers often do not see the link between their actions today and the future consequences. They also have a tendency to feel indestructible and immune to the problems that others **experience**.

While some teens will experiment with a drug and stop, or continue to use it occasionally, others will develop an **addiction**, moving on to more dangerous drugs and causing significant **harm** to themselves and maybe to others. It is difficult to know which teens will experiment and stop and which will develop serious problems. Teenagers at risk of developing serious drug problems include those with a family history of substance use disorders, who are depressed, who have low **self-esteem**, and who feel they do not **fit in**.

■ Legal and illegal drugs

Teenagers abuse a variety of drugs, both legal and illegal. Legal drugs include alcohol, **prescribed** medications, **inhalants** (fumes from **glues**, aerosols and solvents), and **over-the-counter** medications.

The most commonly used illegal drugs are marijuana, stimulants (cocaine, **crack**, **meth**, etc), **LSD**, **PCP**, **opiates**, heroin, and **designer drugs** (ecstasy). The use of illegal drugs is increasing, especially among young teens. The average age of first marijuana use is around 14. The use of marijuana in high school has become common.

There are many signs that a teen is using drugs. It can be difficult to tell the difference between the mood changes of adolescence and actual drug use, but parents can take preventive actions by talking to their teen to find out what is going on.



■ Signs of drug abuse

Some **common signs** of teen drug abuse include:

- bad school marks
- **bloodshot** eyes
- laughing for no reason
- loss of interest in activities
- poor hygiene
- careless personal appearance
- avoiding eye contact
- frequent hunger
- secretive behaviour
- unusual tiredness.




Green amphetamine




bloodshot: *iniettato di sangue*
crack: *sostanza stupefacente ricavata dalla cocaina*
designer drug: *droga di sintesi*
to experience: *provare*
to fit in: *inserirsi*
glue: *colla*
harm: *danno*

inhalant: *sostanza da inalare*
opiate: *oppiaceo*
over-the-counter: *da banco*
prescribed: *su prescrizione medica*
meth: *metanfetamina in cristalli*
self-esteem: *autostima*


1  **Answer the questions.**

1. Why is experimentation with drugs common during adolescence?
2. How do adolescents tend to feel?
3. Which teenagers are at risk of developing serious drug problems?
4. Which drugs are legally available?
5. What is the average age of first marijuana use?
6. Why is it sometimes difficult to understand whether a teenager is using drugs?
7. How should parents react if they suspect their children are using drugs?
8. Can school behaviour be influenced by drug use?

2  **The following are terms associated with drugs. Guess their meaning by matching the items on the left to their meaning on the right.**

- | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 1. Withdrawal symptoms | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. A strong need that someone feels to regularly take an illegal or harmful drug |
| 2. Pusher | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. No longer using illegal drugs |
| 3. Rehab | <input type="checkbox"/> | c. A feeling produced by drugs or alcohol |
| 4. Addiction | <input type="checkbox"/> | d. Too much of a drug that someone takes at one time |
| 5. Clean | <input type="checkbox"/> | e. The process of helping someone to give up drugs |
| 6. Abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> | f. The unpleasant physical and mental effects suffered by someone who stops taking a substance that they are addicted to, especially a drug |
| 7. High | <input type="checkbox"/> | g. A person who sells illegal drugs |
| 8. Overdose | <input type="checkbox"/> | h. The use of illegal drugs in a way that is harmful to your health |



3  **Read the following letter from a mother whose son died of a drug overdose and sum it up in a few sentences.**

Next month, it will be 3 years since the death of my son Brian, who was only 19 years old. I still feel this strongly. It doesn't get any easier for me. I just learn to live with the pain. Brian was a high



honours student who in his senior year started smoking marijuana. We didn't know because he never showed any signs of using drugs. One year later, while attending college to become a Meteorologist, he began abusing anxyolitics and pain medicines. That's when we really began to see a change in him. He became introverted and was sleeping a lot. Brian went into a recovery clinic and we celebrated him being clean for 6 months. I really believed he was clean, but little did we know that Brian had moved on to heroin. On Sept. 5, 2009 my son was found lifeless in his dad's van. He had died of an accidental heroin overdose.