

Department of Defense

Work-Life Programs

Health & Wellness



National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week: March 20-26, 2023

Addiction can happen at any age, but it usually starts when a person is young and can have profound effects on the brain. In 2010, scientists at The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) created programming for National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week® (NDAFW) to “bring together scientists, students, educators, healthcare providers, and community partners to help advance the science and address youth drug and alcohol use in communities and nationwide.” The week-long NDAFW health observance happens annually to spark conversation focused on drug use and addiction research in youth populations. NIDA hopes that its sponsored community events, in partnership with the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, provide opportunities for teens to “learn what science has taught us about drug use and addiction” because developing brains are most vulnerable to changes caused by drug use.

What are the signs of addiction?

An important sign of addiction is when a person continues to use substances even though it negatively impacts aspects of their life including physical health, performance at school or work, or relationships. In many cases, the person believes they can't stop using drugs even when life in, no matter what happens.

These signs can alert you that a child in your life may be struggling with substance abuse or addiction:

- **Hanging out with different friends than usual**
- **Caring less about their appearance**
- **Having noticeable changes in grades or other academic reports**
- **Missing classes or skipping school**
- **Losing interest in their favorite activities**
- **Getting in trouble in school or with the law**
- **Having different eating or sleeping habits**
- **Having more problems with family members and friends**

Parents, guardians, and mentors are powerful influencers to teenagers. When responsible adults make a habit of knowing about their teens—what they are doing, who they are with, and where they are—they can reduce their teens' risks for injury, drug, alcohol, and cigarette use. Research shows that teens whose parents use effective monitoring practices are less likely to make poor decisions. This can include setting clear expectations for behavior with regular check-ins to be sure these expectations are being met. Research also shows that teens who believe their parents/guardians disapprove of risky behaviors are less likely to choose those behaviors. So, don't be afraid to be involved in your child's daily affairs!

For More Information on Risk Factors, Prevention, and NDAFW visit:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [High Risk Substance Use in Youth | Adolescent and School Health](#)
- Mayo Clinic: [Teen drug abuse: Help your teen avoid drugs](#)
- National Institute on Drug Abuse: [National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week® \(NDAFW\)](#)

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