



Search Mayo Clinic

Request an Appointment

Log in to Patient Account

Find a Doctor

English

Find a Job

Give Now

PATIENT CARE & HEALTH INFO

DEPARTMENTS & CENTERS

RESEARCH

EDUCATION

FOR MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

PRODUCTS & SERVICES

GIVING TO MAYO CLINIC

Healthy Lifestyle

Print

# Tween and teen health

Basics In-Depth Expert Answers Multimedia Resources News From Mayo Clinic What's New

Products and services

The Mayo Clinic Diet

What is your weight-loss goal?

5-10 lbs »

11-25 lbs »

25+ lbs »

## Teen drug abuse: Help your teen avoid drugs

**Teen drug abuse can have a major impact on your child's life. Find out how to help your teen make healthy choices and avoid using drugs.**

By Mayo Clinic Staff

Teens who experiment with drugs put their health and safety at risk. Help prevent teen drug abuse by talking to your teen about the consequences of using drugs and the importance of making healthy choices.

### Why teens use or misuse drugs

Various factors can contribute to teen drug use and misuse. First-time use often occurs in social settings with easily accessible substances, such as alcohol and cigarettes.

Continued use might be a result of insecurities or a desire for social acceptance. Teens may feel indestructible and might not consider the consequences of their actions, leading them to take dangerous risks with drugs.

Common risk factors for teen drug abuse include:

- A family history of substance abuse
- A mental or behavioral health condition, such as depression, anxiety or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Impulsive or risk-taking behavior
- A history of traumatic events, such as experiencing a car accident or being a victim of abuse
- Low self-esteem or feelings of social rejection

### Consequences of teen drug abuse

Negative consequences of teen drug abuse might include:

- **Drug dependence.** Teens who misuse drugs are at increased risk of serious drug use later in life.
- **Poor judgment.** Teenage drug use is associated with poor judgment in social and personal interactions.

#### Advertisement

Mayo Clinic does not endorse companies or products. Advertising revenue supports our not-for-profit mission.

Advertising & Sponsorship Policy | Opportunities | Ad Choices

#### Mayo Clinic Marketplace

Check out these best-sellers and special offers on books and newsletters from Mayo Clinic.

- FREE TRIAL — Mayo Clinic Health Letter
- 4 simple steps to a joy-filled life
- Mayo Clinic on Arthritis
- Stop osteoporosis in its tracks
- The Mayo Clinic Diet Online

#### Free E-newsletter

Subscribe to Housecall

Our general interest e-newsletter keeps you up to date on a wide variety of health topics.

Sign up now

- **Sexual activity.** Drug use is associated with high-risk sexual activity, unsafe sex and unplanned pregnancy.
- **Mental health disorders.** Drug use can complicate or increase the risk of mental health disorders, such as depression and anxiety.
- **Impaired driving.** Driving under the influence of any drug can impair a driver's motor skills, putting the driver, passengers and others on the road at risk.
- **Changes in school performance.** Substance use can result in a decline in academic performance.

## Health effects of drugs

Drug use can result in drug addiction, serious impairment, illness and death. Health risks of commonly used drugs include the following:

- **Cocaine** — Risk of heart attack, stroke and seizures
- **Ecstasy** — Risk of liver failure and heart failure
- **Inhalants** — Risk of damage to heart, lungs, liver and kidneys from long-term use
- **Marijuana** — Risk of impairment in memory, learning, problem solving and concentration; risk of psychosis — such as schizophrenia, hallucination or paranoia — later in life associated with early and frequent use
- **Methamphetamine** — Risk of psychotic behaviors from long-term use or high doses
- **Opioids** — Risk of respiratory distress or death from overdose
- **Electronic cigarettes (vaping)** — Exposure to harmful substances similar to exposure from cigarette smoking; risk of nicotine dependence

## Talking about teen drug use

You'll likely have multiple conversations with your teen about drug and alcohol use. Choose times when you're unlikely to be interrupted — and set aside phones. It's also important to know when not to have a conversation, such as when you're angry with your child, you aren't prepared to answer questions, or your child is drunk or high.

To talk to your teen about drugs:

- **Ask your teen's views.** Avoid lectures. Instead, listen to your teen's opinions and questions about drugs. Assure your teen that he or she can be honest with you.
- **Discuss reasons not to use drugs.** Avoid scare tactics. Emphasize how drug use can affect the things that are important to your teen — such as sports, driving, health and appearance.
- **Consider media messages.** Social media, television programs, movies and songs can glamorize or trivialize drug use. Talk about what your teen sees and hears.
- **Discuss ways to resist peer pressure.** Brainstorm with your teen about how to turn down offers of drugs.
- **Be ready to discuss your own drug use.** Think about how you'll respond if your teen asks about your own drug use. If you chose not to use drugs, explain why. If you did use drugs, share what the experience taught you.

## Other preventive strategies

Consider other strategies to prevent teen drug abuse:

- **Know your teen's activities.** Pay attention to your teen's whereabouts. Find out what adult-supervised activities your teen is interested in and encourage him or her to get involved.
- **Establish rules and consequences.** Explain your family rules, such as leaving a party where drug use occurs and not riding in a car with a driver who's been using drugs. If your teen breaks the rules, consistently enforce consequences.
- **Know your teen's friends.** If your teen's friends use drugs, your teen might feel pressure to experiment, too.
- **Keep track of prescription drugs.** Take an inventory of all prescription and over-the-counter medications in your home.
- **Provide support.** Offer praise and encouragement when your teen succeeds. A strong bond between you and your teen might help prevent your teen from using drugs.
- **Set a good example.** If you drink, do so in moderation. Use prescription drugs as directed. Don't use illicit drugs.

## Recognizing the warning signs of teen drug abuse

Be aware of possible red flags, such as:

- Sudden or extreme change in friends, eating habits, sleeping patterns, physical appearance, coordination or school performance
- Irresponsible behavior, poor judgment and general lack of interest
- Breaking rules or withdrawing from the family
- The presence of medicine containers, despite a lack of illness, or drug paraphernalia in your teen's room

## Seeking help for teen drug abuse

If you suspect or know that your teen is experimenting with or misusing drugs:

- **Talk to him or her.** You can never intervene too early. Casual drug use can turn into excessive use or addiction and cause accidents, legal trouble and health problems.
- **Encourage honesty.** Speak calmly and express that you are coming from a place of concern. Share specific details to back up your suspicion. Verify any claims he or she makes.
- **Focus on the behavior, not the person.** Emphasize that drug use is dangerous but that doesn't mean your teen is a bad person.
- **Check in regularly.** Spend more time with your teen, know your teen's whereabouts, and ask questions after he or she returns home.
- **Get professional help.** If you think your teen is involved in significant drug use, contact a doctor, counselor or other health care provider for help.

It's never too soon to start talking to your teen about drug abuse. The conversations you have today can help your teen make healthy choices in the future.

Share

Tweet

[See more In-depth](#)

---

### See also

[College depression](#)

[Distracted Driving](#)

[Tips for parenting teens](#)

[Performance-enhancing drugs](#)

[Piercings: How to prevent complications](#)

[Talking to your teen about sex](#)

[Suggestions as you consider your future career](#)

[Show more related content](#)

---

## Other Topics in Patient Care & Health Info

[Healthy Lifestyle](#)

[Symptoms A-Z](#)

[Diseases & Conditions A-Z](#)

[Tests & Procedures A-Z](#)

[Drugs & Supplements A-Z](#)

[Appointments](#)

[Patient & Visitor Guide](#)

[Billing & Insurance](#)

[Patient Online Services](#)

[Healthy Lifestyle](#)

[Tween and teen health](#)

[In-Depth](#)

[Teen drug abuse Help your teen avoid drugs](#)

ART-20045921

[REQUEST APPOINTMENT](#)

[GIVE NOW](#)

[CONTACT US](#)

[ABOUT MAYO CLINIC](#)

[EMPLOYEES](#)


[SITE MAP](#)

[ABOUT THIS SITE](#)

Any use of this site constitutes your agreement to the [Terms and Conditions](#) and [Privacy Policy](#) linked below.

[Terms and Conditions](#)  
[Privacy Policy](#)

A single copy of these materials may be reprinted for noncommercial personal use only. "Mayo," "Mayo Clinic," "MayoClinic.org," "Mayo Clinic Healthy Living," and the triple-shield Mayo Clinic logo are trademarks of Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research.

 This site complies with the [HONcode](#) website [standard for trustworthy health](#) information: is [verify here](#).  
certified by Health

[Notice of Privacy Practices](#)

[Notice of Nondiscrimination](#)

[Manage Cookies](#)

On the  
Net  
Foundation.  
Click to  
verify.

---

© 1998-2019 Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER). All rights reserved.

