



# Is my child using drugs?

It is hard to tell with any certainty when a person might be using drugs. Changes that you notice in your child's behaviour or moods might be due to drug use or they may indicate that he or she is unwell or not coping with something in their life which has nothing to do with drug use at all.

Signs and behaviours that might give cause for concern include:

- tiredness or changes in sleeping patterns
- lethargy or lack of interest in activities
- changes in mood – irritability or explosive outbursts
- withdrawing from family or friends, keeping to themselves
- increased school absences, declining marks or discipline issues
- changes in social activities and social groups
- poor concentration
- unwillingness to answer questions
- dishonesty
- trouble with the police.

However, these behaviours are common for young people who are going through puberty and challenging times. It is important then not to jump to conclusions rather to see these signs or behaviours as an indicator of a need to clarify what is going on for them and expressing your concern.

## What should I do if I think my child is using drugs?

Talk openly and honestly with them, just as you would with any other health related issue. This may be a hard conversation so try to not use harsh or judging words and focus on listening really well and being supportive.

If you think that your child is using drugs or they share with you that they are using drugs, it is important to remember that most drug use is experimental or recreational and does not lead to problematic use or dependence. Overreacting or feeding into panic or searching their room could lead to your child disengaging from you, making it harder for you to find out what is actually happening for them.

## When talking with your child about drug use:

- **Choose an appropriate time and place to talk**

Sometimes starting a conversation about difficult topics is easier when you are engaged in a shared activity. Other times it might be better to find a quiet, non-confrontational place away from distractions and potential interruptions such as other people in the house, your phone or the television. Give your child your full attention. Be guided by what you know about how your child communicates and by your level of concern.

- **Ask about use**

Find out what substances your child has tried, what effects the substances had, and how he or she feels about their substance use. To gain and show understanding, listen carefully to what your child is saying. Try not to react negatively or judgementally if they acknowledge things they like about using the substance and why.

- **Share concerns**

Talk about your concerns, not only about your child's drug use but also to check out if there are other problems that may be going on, such as problems at school or with friends.

- **Acknowledge their concerns**

Encourage your child to share any things they may be concerned about connected with their drug use and acknowledge these without judging.

- **Talk about options**

Acknowledge that you are there for your child and that together you can work out options for moving forward, to help them cease use or begin to cut down.

- **Seek support together**

There is no need to feel alone if your child or anyone else in your family is struggling with a drug use issue. There are a number of support services you can access to work out how to get the best form of help for your situation. You can also talk with your doctor.

## For more information

For information on resources and support services in your area that can help if you think your child may have a drug use issue, call the Alcohol and Drug Support Line or your local Community Alcohol and Drug Service, or talk with your doctor. Click on the Who can help? tab on the SDERA website for contact details and options.

## Contact SDERA

T: (08) 9402 6415

F: (08) 9402 6399

W: [www.sdera.wa.edu.au](http://www.sdera.wa.edu.au)

E: [sdera.co@education.wa.edu.au](mailto:sdera.co@education.wa.edu.au)

## Parent and Family Drug Support Line

24/7 free and confidential counselling, information and referral

T: (08) 9442 5050

T: 1800 653 203 (country callers)

E: [alcoholdrugsupport@mhc.wa.gov.au](mailto:alcoholdrugsupport@mhc.wa.gov.au)

## Alcohol and Drug Support Line

24/7 free and confidential counselling, information and referral

T: (08) 9442 5000

T: 1800 198 024 (country callers)

E: [alcoholdrugsupport@mhc.wa.gov.au](mailto:alcoholdrugsupport@mhc.wa.gov.au)

## Meth Helpline

24/7 free and confidential counselling, information and referral

T: 1800 874 878

E: [alcoholdrugsupport@mhc.wa.gov.au](mailto:alcoholdrugsupport@mhc.wa.gov.au)

W: [alcoholdrugsupport.mhc.wa.gov.au](http://alcoholdrugsupport.mhc.wa.gov.au)

