

Indicators of Substance Abuse in Adults

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

Common physical signs of drug or alcohol addiction are:

- **Bloodshot eyes:** Anyone who is addicted to heroin usually has constricted pupils, also known as miosis. They may also have bloodshot eyes.
- **Sudden weight loss:** People who are addicted to cocaine, ecstasy or methamphetamine may lose their appetite and subsequently lose weight quickly.
- **Interrupted sleep patterns:** Common signs of substance abuse include insomnia (difficulty sleeping at night) or hypersomnia (sleeping for too long).
- **Change in complexion:** Repeated drug use can lead to acne, paleness and jaundice. There may also be scabs, scars, bruises and track marks on the body.
- **Poor personal hygiene:** Bathing, brushing teeth and physical cleanliness may decline in anyone who is drug dependent.

CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR

In addition to physical changes, a person who is misusing alcohol or drugs may act abnormally. Some of the significant behavioral signs of drug abuse in adults include:

- **Secretive behavior:** The person withdraws from friends and family and constantly looks for a private place to use drugs.
- **Ignoring responsibilities:** Becoming addicted to drugs or alcohol can make a person avoid their daily responsibilities such as work, school or taking care of the home.
- **Financial distress:** Most illicit drugs are very expensive, so a person using drugs may need to keep borrowing money without a reason. They may also sell their belongings to get money for drugs.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS

When someone misuses drugs, they may experience changes in their feelings, which will also affect their behavior. Some common psychological signs include:

- **Depression and anxiety:** You may notice signs of depression and anxiety where they never existed before, including your loved one losing interest in things they used to love, sleeping too little or too much or gaining or losing dramatic amounts of weight, to name a few.
- **Low self-esteem:** Individuals with drug addictions may demonstrate a marked lack of confidence in their abilities, intelligence, looks or other aspects of their life.
- **Poor motivation:** You may notice that people demonstrating substance misuse symptoms set extravagant goals, but have no motivation to achieve them.
- **Irritability and mood swings:** Another symptom of drug use can manifest as sudden agitation and unpredictable temperament.

Gateway Foundation (2020). Signs and Symptoms of Drug Abuse in Adults.

<https://www.gatewayfoundation.org/faqs/signs-and-symptoms-of-drug-abuse-in-adults/>