

Warning Signs of Alcohol and Substance Misuse

- The indicators or warning signs associated with alcohol and drug addiction, are similar to a variety of physical and mental disorders.
- They are not meant to substitute for a screening or qualified clinical assessment.
- Warning signs of alcohol and substance misuse can manifest in many forms, such as, physical, behavioral and psychological.
- Warning signs can vary depending on the type of substance being used.

Physical Warning Signs of Alcohol or Substance Misuse

- Bloodshot eyes, pupils larger or smaller than usual
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- Deterioration of physical appearance, personal grooming habits
- Runny nose or sniffing
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain
- Tremors, slurred speech, or impaired coordination
- Unusual odors on breath, body, or clothing

Behavioral Warning Signs of Alcohol or Substance Misuse

- Using causes difficulties in one's relationships
- Engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviors
- Frequently getting into legal trouble, including fights, accidents, illegal activities, and driving under the influence
- Neglecting responsibilities at work, school, or home, including neglecting one's children
- Sudden change in friends, favorite hangouts, and hobbies
- Unexplained need for money or financial problems; may borrow or steal money
- Using drugs under dangerous conditions (driving while using drugs, using dirty needles, having unprotected sex)

Behavioral Warning Signs of a Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

- Increased drug tolerance (the need to use more of the drug to experience the same effects one used to achieve with smaller amounts)
- Using drugs to avoid or relieve withdrawal symptoms (nausea, restlessness, insomnia, depression, sweating, shaking, anxiety)
- Loss of control over drug use (using more than intended, unable to stop)
- Life revolves around drug use (always thinking of using, figuring how to get more, or recovering from use)
- Abandoning enjoyable activities (hobbies, sports, and socializing) to use drugs
- Continuing to use regardless of negative consequences (blackouts, infections, mood swings, depression, paranoia)



Wheeler

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Clearinghouse**

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for Prevention, Wellness and Recovery

800.232.4424 (phone)

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A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

Psychological Warning Signs of Alcohol and Substance Misuse

- Appearing fearful, anxious, or paranoid, with no reason
- Lack of motivation; appearing tired or "spaced out"
- Periods of unusual increased energy, nervousness, or instability
- Sudden mood swings, increased irritability, or angry outbursts
- Unexplained change in personality or attitude

Warning Signs of Commonly Misused Drugs

Depressants (including Xanax, Valium, GHB): Contracted pupils; drunk-like; difficulty concentrating; clumsiness; poor judgment; slurred speech; sleepiness

Inhalants (glues, aerosols, vapors): Watery eyes; impaired vision, memory and thought; secretions from the nose or rashes around the nose and mouth; headaches and nausea; appearance of intoxication; drowsiness; poor muscle control; changes in appetite; anxiety; irritability; lots of cans/aerosols in the trash

Hallucinogens (LSD, PCP): Dilated pupils; bizarre and irrational behavior including paranoia, aggression, hallucinations; mood swings; detachment from people; absorption with self or other objects; slurred speech; confusion

Heroin: Contracted pupils; no response of pupils to light; needle marks; sleeping at unusual times; sweating; vomiting; coughing; sniffing; twitching; loss of appetite

Marijuana: Glassy, red eyes; loud talking; inappropriate laughter followed by sleepiness; loss of interest, motivation; weight gain or loss

Stimulants (including amphetamines, cocaine, crystal meth): Dilated pupils; hyperactivity; euphoria; irritability; anxiety; excessive talking followed by depression or excessive sleeping at odd times; may go long periods of time without eating or sleeping; weight loss; dry mouth and nose

Connecticut Resources

Department of Mental
Health and Addiction
Services

www.ct.gov/dmhas

National Resources

Substance Abuse and
Mental Health Services
Administration

www.samhsa.gov

1.800.662.HELP (4357)

National Institute on
Drug Abuse

www.drugabuse.gov

