

Drugs Are Killing Our Youth: When to Call For a Clinical Family Intervention

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According to top rehabilitation facility research, the percentage of high school seniors who admitted to using Vicodin and Oxycontin at least once in the last year was 9.6 percent and 5.2 percent, respectively. It is common for opiate abuse to begin with these two substances.

Most of these young adults don't have their use detected while on prescription drugs; yet, because of increased unavailability and exorbitant price (as much as \$50 per pill), the natural segue is to move on to street heroin. This is an even uglier descent down the addiction ladder. We now have an epidemic of deaths linked to Fentanyl-laced street drugs that has dramatically increased the number of deaths being reported globally.

The most common signs/indicators that your teenager may be using dangerous drugs are usually right in front of you. Because heroin is commonly smoked (yes, smoked), you may find remnants of the drug itself—a powdery or crumbled substance ranging in color from off-white to dark brown. Black tar is sticky rather than powdery.

You may find metal or glass pipes, usually the size of chemistry-lab test tubes. Syringes may also be present, as well as dirty spoons, lighters and small pieces of foil. These items are typically found in littered areas, be it the bedroom, bathroom, patio and vehicles.

Physical and physiological signs of use include the following: constricted pupils; fading in and out during wakefulness; and slower breathing, which can be a precursor to an overdose and a startling education into how drugs can kill. Moreover, decision-making, self-control and intact memory spirals downward. Itching, nausea, constipation and vomiting may occur.

If you have an inkling that you have a son or daughter using opioids, regardless of type or use choice, take immediate action. Begin your journey into insight, education and awareness, even if your young person refuses to be part of the process. Loved ones being involved in treatment is paramount. If you discover that any family member is in trouble call for referrals and resources immediately.

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