

Substance Use and Young Adults

Substance Use—Fighting Back

Young adulthood. It's a time of growth, exploration and independence. For those in the age range of 18 to 26, this is the time when they begin to chart their own course. They may be away from parents for the first time, starting college, full-time work or new families, where they will make the choices that will shape their lives. This includes deciding whether to use alcohol or drugs.

If a young person close to you misuses alcohol or drugs, it's important to be honest about the problem and seek help.

The combination of newfound independence and the pressures of school or new careers can lead to risky behaviors. For example, research shows that people tend to drink the heaviest in their late teens and early to mid-20s. And the rates of illicit drug use are higher in young adults than in any other age group. You may know a young person who is having trouble with drinking or drug use, but keep in mind that help with prevention and recovery is available.

In this issue of *Your Source*, you'll learn how to:

- Spot the warning signs of alcohol and drug use
- Help the young adult cope with the problem
- Tap into resources that can help with recovery

Your guidance and open communication is helpful to a young person who is independent, yet struggling with substance use. Although he or she may not approve of your concern at first, you can play a positive role in his or her recovery.

Go online today! Log on to access *Substance Use and Young Adults* and other helpful resources in the *Spotlight* section, and share this with your co-workers and family members.



Employee Assistance Program

1-800-478-2812

For TTY Users: 1-800-456-4006



Log on here!



Warning Signs of Abuse

If you suspect that a young person may be using drugs or alcohol, look for these signs:

- Being more isolated, angry, nervous, moody or careless
- Having bloodshot eyes or widened pupils
- Showing poor judgment or risky, reckless behavior
- Showing changes in grooming habits and/or hygiene
- Missing money or valuables
- Losing interest in activities that were enjoyed before
- Suddenly dropping one group of friends for another
- Missing work or school and/or being late, often on Mondays
- Getting less work or study done, and having less ability to focus
- Wanting more privacy, avoiding eye contact

If the person you think might have a substance use problem is a co-worker, you may also notice that this person:

- Needs you and others to pick up part of the person's workload
- Asks co-workers to cover up for lateness
- Makes a lot of personal calls
- Always seems "tired"

Seeing these signs usually means that he or she needs help.

Taking Action to Help the Young Adult

When a young person has a problem with drugs or alcohol, it's important to act as soon as possible. The sooner people get help, the greater their chances for recovery. First, it's important to learn as much as you can about what is involved in overcoming substance use. Some helpful sources are shown here.

Intervene to Begin the Recovery Process

It often is not easy for the young person to admit that help for substance abuse is needed. When a person is reluctant to seek help, you may need to carefully confront him or her. This can be done along with other family members and friends. It's good to outline the problems the person will likely face in work, family and long-term health if he or she does not get treatment. The goal is to have the young person accept help and begin recovery.



Treatment Help is Available

Substance use treatment can be provided in a variety of settings. Stopping the alcohol or drug use is the first step to recovery. Most people need help to stop. Often a person with alcohol or drug dependence will need treatment provided by professionals, just as with other diseases. The person's doctor may be able to offer guidance. Or he or she could see a mental health provider.

Be There to Offer Support

Whether he or she uses self-help, therapy or a treatment program, the young person will need ongoing support in recovery. Family, close friends, therapists and even other recovering people can provide encouragement and guidance. If you notice a young person going back into substance use, talk about it openly and ask what you can do to help. Recovering from a substance problem doesn't end with a brief treatment program. It is a lifelong process. Joining support groups can be very helpful in battling addiction.

Correct answer is C. Your friend or family member does not have to lose everything before getting treatment. Positive pressure from family, friends, co-workers and health care professionals can move a person to seek treatment earlier. This can be a life-saving step.

Which strategy for curbing a young person's substance use is not recommended?

- A. Encourage the young person to admit the problem.
- B. Attend a support group meeting.
- C. Begin helping once the person hits "rock bottom."
- D. Help the person avoid situations where substances are used.

Check your answer at the bottom.

Now That's an Idea!

Helpful resources support recovery

Check out these resources that can help combat substance use.

The family physician—can be a great resource. He or she may recommend a specialist.

Your organization's Magellan program—offers information and community resources.

Find local treatment resources—the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: www.samhsa.gov/treatment.

Alcohol support groups for families and teens—Alanon/Alateen: www.al-anon.alateen.org; phone 1-888-4-alanon.

Drug support groups for families and friends—Nar-Anon Family Groups: www.nar-anon.org.

General information about alcohol problems—the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism: www.niaaa.nih.gov.