

## **Parents and Peers Have the Power to Stop Teen Substance Abuse**

A new effort launched by the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign hopes to reduce teen drug use by enlisting the power of parents and peers to intervene with young people who have already begun drug use and underage drinking. Research shows that teens look to their friends and parents when it comes to problems with drugs. By taking early action, parents and friends can help them avoid serious consequences that can jeopardize their future.

Teens who use drugs risk damaging their developing minds and bodies – and face the possibility of addiction. How, and when, you respond to your teenager when you suspect or find out your child is using drugs could have a serious impact on his or her future. Research shows that the earlier kids try marijuana, the more likely they are to become addicted to drugs later in life, and young teens using marijuana are four times more susceptible to becoming dependent than adults.

Any drug use puts teens at risk. Not every teen that uses drugs will become dependent, but there is no way to know if a teen will progress from use to addiction or how quickly that could happen.

More than 100,000 young people enter drug treatment programs each year for dependence on marijuana and other illicit drugs; and according to the latest National Survey on Drug Use and Health, more than two million youth have a clinically diagnosable dependence on illegal drugs or alcohol.

If you suspect your teenager has tried drugs or alcohol, then you know your son or daughter is at a critical crossroads. Parents need to be aware of the signs of substance abuse – declining school performance, a new set of friends, becoming withdrawn, uninterested, or argumentative – and be prepared to take action.

- Let your teen know that you know about their drug use.
- Tell your teen that you love them and that you're worried about them.
- Explain that drugs have serious consequences and that you want to help them.

This article is brought to you by the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. Resources and information on what to do when a teen is suspected or known to be using drugs are available on [www.TheAntiDrug.com](http://www.TheAntiDrug.com). Additional materials, including brochures, posters, and postcards, are available free of charge through the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 1-800-788-2800.