

Preventing Teenage Drug Abuse With Drug Testing: A Guide for Parents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- [Introduction](#)
- Signs and Symptoms of Teen Drug Abuse
- Preventing Teen Drug Use
- Drug Testing Methods
- What Method is Best for the Short-Term?
- What Method is Best for the Long-Term?
- The Best Drug Testing Plan For Parents
- Additional Resources

INTRODUCTION

The failure to protect our children from drug use and addiction is unacceptable. When we hear about the three most common causes of death for teenagers -- accidents, homicides, and suicides -- all too often drugs and alcohol have contributed to these untimely deaths. The fact that adolescents generally do not conceal illnesses or ailments -- yet they go to great lengths to hide their drug and alcohol use -- exacerbates the problem and makes it exceptionally difficult for adults to detect drug use.

Teens Today research from SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) and Liberty Mutual Group has suggested that parents are the number one deterrent to a teen's decision to use drugs. Studies by that group have shown that the average age of first drug use is 13; more than one-third of teens have used drugs, including almost one in six middle school students and 30% of their high school counterparts reporting marijuana use; and 13% of high school students report using drugs such as cocaine, crack or ecstasy.

It doesn't matter where you live, your economic background, your ethnicity, your race or religion. Drugs affect everyone, everywhere and whether or not you'd like to admit it, they can affect your teenager's life as well.

But it's not all doom and gloom. In fact, there are plenty of ways to prevent teen drug abuse but you need to act quickly. The sooner you start implementing these tactics in your home, the more likely you will be to discourage drug use and prevent all of the unfortunate and devastating effects drugs can have on a family.

Research shows that people who make it through their teenage years without using drugs are much less likely to start using them when they are older. So if testing can help keep kids off drugs and alcohol and if it can help free young minds for learning and allow growing bodies to escape the devastating cycle of dependence or addiction, it will be a valuable and important new tool.

Included in this booklet are answers to questions that parents and other concerned individuals might have about the process of drug testing. It explains, in general, what drug testing is all about.



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction
- [Signs and Symptoms of Teen Drug Abuse](#)
- Preventing Teen Drug Use
- Drug Testing Methods
- What Method is Best for the Short-Term?
- What Method is Best for the Long-Term?
- The Best Drug Testing Plan For Parents
- Additional Resources

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF TEEN DRUG ABUSE

One of the first ways you can prevent drug use is to tune into your kids. How do they behave normally? Has a sudden change in behavior occurred? Is hygiene no longer important? Do they withdraw from once loved activities and friends? Are their grades suffering? Drug abuse may be to blame. Review the following warning signs to see if your teen may be abusing drugs:

PHYSICAL:

- » Bloodshot or red eyes
- » Unexplained bruises or an increase in bruises
- » Difficulty speaking or slurring of words
- » Drastic change in appearance or weight
- » Lack of attention to hygiene
- » Poorly kept clothing and appearance
- » Change in sleep (insomnia or sleeping all day)
- » Fatigue
- » Persistent cough

SOCIAL:

- » Lack of interest in things or activities that once brought enjoyment
- » A sudden disassociation from friends
- » A sudden acquiring of a new social group
- » Dropping of grades
- » Failure to go to school
- » Secretive or sneaky behavior
- » Staying out late frequently
- » Stealing
- » Leaving for extended time periods
- » Sudden anger or agitation when asked about reason for behavioral changes
- » Avoidance of eye contact

EMOTIONAL:

- » Suffers emotional breakdowns
- » Very aggressive or argumentative
- » Depression or withdrawal from social activities
- » Irritability
- » Lack of judgment skills

BEHAVIORAL:

- » Abnormal odor on breath or clothing
- » Prescription medications, alcohol and/or money disappearing from the household
- » Failure to meet responsibilities to work, school and extracurricular activities
- » Notification from a teacher, coach or employer of abnormal behavior
- » Discovering pipes, rolling papers, bong, needles, powdery substances in their room

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction
- Signs and Symptoms of Teen Drug Abuse
- [Preventing Teen Drug Use](#)
- Drug Testing Methods
- What Method is Best for the Short-Term?
- What Method is Best for the Long-Term?
- The Best Drug Testing Plan For Parents
- Additional Resources

These signs, or any combination of them, may indicate a problem. With this information in hand, you are now prepared to develop a plan of action for your home to stop drug abuse or prevent it from starting.

PREVENTING TEEN DRUG USE

Now that you are informed about the typical signs that indicate drug abuse, you are prepared to discuss the issues that concern your child: What they are afraid of; the force of peer pressure and a whole host of other topics may come up. The most important thing is that you engage in a dialogue and don't be afraid to ask the tough questions. In order to prepare your son or daughter for the world and for the offers of drugs they will most likely encounter, take an involved approach to parenting:

TALK:

No loving relationship can exist without communication. Teens have valuable things to say and, when a parent listens genuinely, it helps self-esteem and confidence. The most important thing to remember when it comes to talking about difficult subjects like drinking and drugs is that it's not a five-minute "talk" — it's about building an ongoing dialogue. As your children grow up, they will need more and more information, so start early, build on the conversation as your teen matures and always keep the lines of communication open.

These conversations don't have to be formal, sit-down discussions, but even from an early age, talk about drugs, how you feel about them and remember to listen to their concerns.

Parents are the #1 reason why teens don't use drugs.

By establishing this communication with your child from the start, they are more likely to come to you in times of crisis, or when they are confronted with drug use for the first time. Likewise, showing that you know a lot about the subject shows your child how much you care and that you're serious when it comes to drugs. Emphasize the health aspects of using drugs and their negative impact on quality of life. But most of all, just let your child know you understand the pressures they face as a young person today and try to help them work through these moments.

MAKE YOUR POSITION CLEAR:

Make sure that your child knows you are against drug use. They should know that you disapprove of any drug use and that you are serious about it.

BE AVAILABLE:

You can have sit down talks with your kid about the serious implications of drug use, but if you're not there for them when they really need you, talking won't matter that much. Let your child know you're there for them and will always be there for them. Let them know they can come to you when they need to. Reinforce the notion that even if they've broken the rules, you still love them and will help them through their issues. Often times, the most insightful and

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction
- Signs and Symptoms of Teen Drug Abuse
- [Preventing Teen Drug Use](#)
- Drug Testing Methods
- What Method is Best for the Short-Term?
- What Method is Best for the Long-Term?
- The Best Drug Testing Plan For Parents
- Additional Resources

helpful talks you will have with your child will be entirely impromptu, and initiated by your teen.

ACT IT OUT:

Telling your kid to “just say no” isn’t enough. If your child should actually be offered drugs, resisting peer pressure can be tough and overwhelming. So rather than sending your child out into the world unprepared, take the time to practice potential conversations they would have.

Visit <http://www.drugfree.org/parent> for some great scenarios that can help you teach your child just how to say “no” and stand up to peer pressure.

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction
- Signs and Symptoms of Teen Drug Abuse
- Preventing Teen Drug Use
- [Drug Testing Methods](#)
- What Method is Best for the Short-Term?
- What Method is Best for the Long-Term?
- The Best Drug Testing Plan For Parents
- Additional Resources

DRUG TESTING METHODS

There are many types of drug tests available on the market today, but which one is right for you and your family? The following three drug testing methods work well in the home setting and require little to no experience.

URINE DRUG TESTING

Urine drug testing is the most commonly used drug testing type in the home, among employers and law enforcement. Urine tests can detect drugs in your child's system for up to three days after use, but it has been known to detect drugs all the way up to 30 days after use. If you are unsure as to when the drug use took place, but believe it happened in the last few days, a urine drug test is perfect for your situation.

They can detect all of the major drug types at once, or you also have the option to test for a single drug. Additionally, urine drug testing kits are simple and easy to use. Just be sure to stay close by while your teen provides a urine sample and if necessary, have them perform the test more than once.

One of the major shortcomings of urine drug testing is the ability to cheat or adulterate the results. In fact, there is a whole industry designed to help people cheat. Some methods people use include providing a fake urine sample, substituting someone else's urine or adding chemicals to the urine to attempt to adulterate the results. If your son or daughter comes to expect the drug tests they may try to adulterate the results, so practicing random drug testing is an ideal way to identify drug use in your home along with ensuring the tests you use have built-in adulteration detection.

SALIVA DRUG TESTING

Saliva drug testing is ideal to use on the day you suspect drug abuse has occurred, since they can detect drug use within hours. For example, your teen arrives home late after a night out with friends. All you need to do is place the spoon collector in their mouth and then place it in the testing device. The results are ready within minutes.

These test kits are easy to use, non-invasive and provide fast and accurate results, however, if your teen also smokes cigarettes or chews gum often, the test results may be compromised. Even so, these tests are hard to adulterate and if necessary you can take an additional sample and send it in for lab confirmation and receive a full report on the results.. Saliva drug tests are most suited for testing very recent drug use, as they detect drug use upto 48 hours.

HAIR DRUG TESTS

Hair drug tests are by far the most accurate consumer drug test on the market. They are not easy to adulterate – as it is the core of the hair which is tested. Shampoos, bleach, or diet will not effect the results. There are, of course, bleaches and shampoos that exist designed to cheat the test, but nothing has ever been scientifically proven to work in adulterating a hair test. Furthermore, you have the ability to test for possible drug use for up to 90 days, as opposed to

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction
- Signs and Symptoms of Teen Drug Abuse
- Preventing Teen Drug Use
- [Drug Testing Methods](#)
- What Method is Best for the Short-Term?
- What Method is Best for the Long-Term?
- The Best Drug Testing Plan For Parents
- Additional Resources

urine and saliva testing which will only allow you to test from a few hours to a few weeks after use. Hair testing can be more costly and requires the sample to be sent to the lab for testing, however the results can provide you with very vital information e.g. The amount of drug(s) in the donor's system as well as what type of user the donor is., i.e. a low, medium or high user.. Unlike urine and saliva testing, hair drug tests can be performed discretely and a small sample of hair is all that is needed. Though we encourage you to let them know, your child or teen doesn't even have to be aware they're being tested. This way, you don't have to make accusations or create conflict until you know for sure if your child is using drugs.

Hair drug tests can detect a variety of drug types, but be sure to check the packaging before purchase to make sure it detects the drug of most concern to you. These testing kits require an inch-and-a-half of hair, each half inch representing 30 days, which not only makes it one of the most effective testing methods in revealing drug abuse but it also enables you to test your child 365 days out of the year, with a quick, simple test every 90 days (or three months). However, keep in mind that a hair test will not detect drug use within the last 7 days, as the hair needs time to grow, so even if you obtain negative results from the hair test, a saliva test could prove to test positive.

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction
- Signs and Symptoms of Teen Drug Abuse
- Preventing Teen Drug Use
- Drug Testing Methods
- [What Method is Best for the Short-Term?](#)
- What Method is Best for the Long-Term?
- The Best Drug Testing Plan For Parents
- Additional Resources

WHAT METHOD IS BEST FOR THE SHORT-TERM?

Let's say your son or daughter goes out to a party one Saturday night. You've heard rumors about your child's classmate that's hosting this party and have suspicion that's he's a drug user. You trust your child, but you're just not sure how he or she will react under peer pressure.

The best way to put your mind at ease and to show your teen that you are strictly enforcing a no drug policy is to utilize a saliva drug test the morning after the party.

WHEN SHOULD I SHOULD USE SALIVA DRUG TESTING?

Saliva drug testing is best used when you suspect drug use. What we mean by this is that you should utilize this method of testing when you have a specific day in mind that you think drug use may have occurred. The day after a party or a night out with friends is probably the best time to implement it.

HOW DO I USE SALIVA DRUG TESTS?

Saliva drug tests are very easy to use. In most cases, all you need to do is have your teen hold the applicator sponge/spoon in their mouth for a few minutes. Once the spoon has enough saliva, you can place it in the testing device. Results can read straight off of the device within just a few minutes.

WHAT BENEFITS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH SALIVA DRUG TESTING?

One of the biggest benefits of saliva drug testing is the relative lack of embarrassment associated with it. With urine drug testing, you have to ask your teen to pee in a cup, which is something neither of you really want to deal with. Saliva drug testing can be completed out in the open as your teen sits on the couch.

Likewise, it's an affordable way to establish drug testing as a routine in your home. Your teen may be less than receptive to the idea of being tested at first, but once it becomes a part of a routine, they will come to expect it and will understand your reasons behind it. If anything, it will be a good form of encouragement for your teen to never even try drugs.

If you obtain a positive result from the saliva drug test, you can send it into the lab for confirmation. We encourage this to make sure the results are accurate before you take the next steps in addressing your child's drug use.

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction
- Signs and Symptoms of Teen Drug Abuse
- Preventing Teen Drug Use
- Drug Testing Methods
- What Method is Best for the Short-Term?
- [What Method is Best for the Long-Term?](#)
- The Best Drug Testing Plan For Parents
- Additional Resources

WHAT METHOD IS BEST FOR THE LONG-TERM?

If your teen has been exhibiting some of the warning signs described earlier or has just not been himself, then you may wish to utilize a drug testing method that is more suited for testing for drug use during a lengthier period of time. The best method to accomplish this is hair drug testing.

Hair drug tests can set you at ease quickly and you can't ask for a more accurate method of testing.

WHEN SHOULD I USE HAIR DRUG TESTING?

You should use hair drug testing when you suspect drug abuse has occurred. For instance, if your teen has been acting a bit strange for the past few weeks and you suspect drug use as the cause, utilize a hair drug test. This is not the kind of test to use right after your child comes home from a party. The enzymes will have not absorbed into the hair at that point. However, if you suspect drug use in the past three months, this is probably the testing method for you.

HOW DO I USE HAIR DRUG TESTS?

A hair drug test is also very easy to use. All you need to do is cut approximately ninety to one hundred and twenty strands of hair, one and a half inches in length from your teen's head, cutting the hair as close to the scalp as possible. The sample should resemble the diameter of a pencil once it is collected.

Next, you will need to place the sample in the provided specimen pouch and mail it off. It should only take a few days to receive your results, which can be accessed via the Internet.

WHAT BENEFITS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH HAIR DRUG TESTING?

Hair drug testing is the most accurate at-home drug testing method available today. It can detect several drugs at a time including Marijuana, Amphetamines, Cocaine, Heroin, Methamphetamines and Ecstasy, and the test has a laboratory guarantee. The results will indicate if your teen has used drugs in the past 90 days, which is very useful if you're unsure specifically when the drug use may have occurred. Additionally, you can find out how much of a drug your teen has been using, so you can further assess the seriousness of the situation. While any drug use is bad, finding out your teen is an habitual user of a drug as opposed to an occasional one is even greater cause for concern.

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction
- Signs and Symptoms of Teen Drug Abuse
- Preventing Teen Drug Use
- Drug Testing Methods
- What Method is Best for the Short-Term?
- What Method is Best for the Long-Term?
- [The Best Drug Testing Plan For Parents](#)
- Additional Resources

THE BEST DRUG TESTING PLAN FOR PARENTS

The best drug testing plan for parents involves a combination of both the short-term and long-term drug testing methods. This is because no one drug test can cover all of your scenarios. A hair drug test isn't going to detect if your son smoked marijuana last night. And a saliva drug test won't be able to tell you if your daughter tried cocaine a month ago. It is only with a combination of these two drug test types that you can be sure to prevent or put a stop to drug abuse in your home.

IMPLEMENTING DRUG TESTING IN YOUR HOME

You can try any sort of drug testing plan that you think will work the best in your home, however, the following can serve as a general guideline to get you started.

- Start With Saliva Drug Testing

Whenever your son or daughter stays out late one night or goes to a social function where a lot of people will be present, use a saliva drug test when they get home or the next morning. They may complain and argue, but the bottom line is a quick saliva drug test will set the precedent in your home. Try not to be too predictable in when you choose to drug test your teen. Instead, test randomly. This will further discourage drug use.

- Round It Out With Hair Drug Testing

Next, introduce hair drug testing into the mix. You obviously do not need to do this as often, but testing every 90 days is a good place to start. This way, there will be no gaps in your testing periods and you will be able to detect drug use, even if you do not specifically know when it may have been used.

- Keep It Up

There's nothing worse than starting a drug testing plan and then not sticking with it. This shows your teen that you're not really serious about it and if they're going to use drugs, they will find a way. Be diligent in your efforts to prevent drug abuse and you will reap the rewards: a drug free home.

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction
- Signs and Symptoms of Teen Drug Abuse
- Preventing Teen Drug Use
- Drug Testing Methods
- What Method is Best for the Short-Term?
- What Method is Best for the Long-Term?
- The Best Drug Testing Plan For Parents
- [Additional Resources](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

ASSOCIATION & ORGANIZATIONS

- [The Partnership For A Drug-Free America](#) is a resource for parents to find information on drug abuse, how approach it and more. It also offers forums for parents to seek the consult of other parents.
- [Parents. The Anti-Drug](#) shows how parents can prevent drug use in the home.
- [School Violence Prevention: Safe & Drug-Free Schools](#) is SAMHSA's website devoted to preventing violence and drug abuse in the nation's schools.
- [Office of Safe & Drug Free Schools](#) organizes violence and drug prevention activities in schools.
- [Community of Anti-Drug Coalitions of America](#) is a collective of anti-drug coalitions across the U.S. that work together to create safer neighborhoods for all.

DRUG TESTING

Once your child stops using drugs, it may be a good idea to enforce a regimen of drug testing in the home to ensure such behavior never occurs again. Random drug testing is usually best in this sort of situation, wherein you test your son or daughter for drug use regularly but at unpredictable times. Once he or she passes the drug tests for a consistent period of time, it may be safe to say you have beat the drug habit together.

TREATMENT PROGRAMS

Treating drug or alcohol abuse can be difficult at best. But if you want the best possible life for your child, seeking treatment for their addiction early is the only way to ensure a happy, healthy future. There are many different types of treatment out there, from rehabilitation facilities to therapy to medication. Most of the time, drug addiction treatment involves several if not all of these treatment options, creating a comprehensive plan for battling addiction. Not sure how to find the right facility for your child? Check out these resources for further information on making the decision:

- [How To Get Your Teenager To Enter A Drug Treatment Program](#)
- [Helping A Child Who Is Using Drugs](#)
- [Drug Addiction Treatment Methods](#)

HOW TO FIND A DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT FACILITY

A great way to begin your search for a drug and alcohol treatment facility for your child is on the Internet. There is a boundless number of resources available to parents in the exact same situation. A few places to start include:

- [SAMHSA](#) - Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator: This search engine allows parents the convenience of finding drug treatment facilities in their area.
- [Sober.com](#) - Adolescent Teenage Drug Rehab Centers: A directory of drug and alcohol and drug treatment facilities with special programs for teens.
- [13 Questions To Ask When Choosing An Addiction Treatment Program](#) - A listing of questions to consider when deciding on a rehab facility.

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction
- Signs and Symptoms of Teen Drug Abuse
- Preventing Teen Drug Use
- Drug Testing Methods
- What Method is Best for the Short-Term?
- What Method is Best for the Long-Term?
- The Best Drug Testing Plan For Parents
- Additional Resources

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