

# 30<sub>b</sub>

Factsheet for parents and teachers

Information about

## Drugs

### What parents need to know

#### Who uses drugs?

*Many young people smoke, drink alcohol and may try drugs. They may do it for fun, because they are curious, or to be like their friends. Some are experimenting with the feeling of intoxication.*

#### Risks and dangers

Using street drugs or alcohol might make you feel good, but they can damage your health. Here are some of the basic facts:

- It is dangerous to mix drugs and alcohol. They each may increase the effects of the other substance, e.g. ecstasy and alcohol can lead to dehydration (overheating), and cause coma and death.
- You cannot know for sure what is in the drug you buy. It might not contain what the dealer says. Some dealers might mix it with other substances or you may get a higher dose of a drug than you are used to, which can be fatal.
- Serious infections, such as HIV and hepatitis, can be spread by sharing needles or 'equipment'.
- Accidents, arguments and fights are more likely after drinking and drug use.
- Using drugs can lead to serious mental illness such as psychosis or depression, and to health problems and overdoses.

<http://www.trippin.co.nz>



## How do you know if your child is using drugs?

Occasional use can be very difficult to detect. If someone is using on a regular basis, their behaviour often changes. Look for signs such as:

- unexplained moodiness
- behaviour that is 'out of character'
- loss of interest in school or friends
- unexplained loss of clothes or money
- unusual smells, silver foil.

Remember, none of these guarantees that your child is using drugs.

## What can parents do?

### In general

- Pay attention to what your child is doing, including school work, friends and leisure time.
- Learn about the effects of alcohol and drugs.
- Listen to what your child says about alcohol and drugs and talk about it with them.
- Encourage your child to be informed and responsible about drugs and alcohol.
- Talk to other parents, friends or teachers about drugs – the facts and your fears.

### If your child is using

#### Do ...

- make sure of your facts
- stay calm.

#### Don't ...

- give up on them
- get into long debates or arguments when they are drunk, stoned or high
- blame them – you may lose their confidence.

## Where to get help

You can talk in confidence to your general practitioner or practice nurse. They can give information and advice on local support and treatment facilities. Other helpful agencies include:

- voluntary counselling centres
- teachers and school based staff (Public health nurses, guidance counsellors or resource teacher for learning and behaviour)
- youth and community workers
- drug and alcohol agencies
- child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)
- social workers
- police

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