

THE "BIG 5"

Addiction Concerns for Teens

1 ALCOHOL



Red Flags

- Any amount of drinking is a red flag!
- The younger the child, the more severe the implications
- Regular consumption with friends (e.g. weekly partying)
- Drinking to cope



What can parents do?

Educate kids about underage drinking:

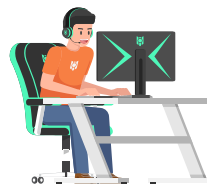
- Don't let kids drink at home
- Kids should not be regularly partying with alcohol



Resources

[NIAAA Facts About Teen Drinking](#)

2 GAMING



Red Flags

- Using more than 3+ hours a day (and/or late into the night)
- Gaming replaces other socialization opportunities
- Extreme anger response to setting limits on gaming
- Spending a lot of money on gaming or loot boxes



What can parents do?

Focus on what can be positively added to their lives (e.g., more sleep, more time with friends) rather than taking away gaming:

- Change is less face-threatening with a gain-frame



Resources

[Healthy Gamer](#)

[Game Quitters](#)

3 THC



Red Flags

- The younger the child, the more severe the implications
- Regular/daily use raises risk
- Concentration/potency raises risk
- Using alone in their room or at school
- Driving while high



What can parents do?

Figure out the emotional need driving use (social pressures, stress, etc.):

- Help kids find ways to meet those needs in other ways
- Educate on the impact of THC on the developing brain



Resources

[Johnny's Ambassadors](#)

[Clear 30](#)

Keep in mind: Many kids are struggling

- About 20% of kids have tried drinking alcohol by 16; under age 20, 90% of drinking is binge drinking
- Up to 20% of teens struggle with gaming addiction
- 15% of teens report using THC weekly

4 SOCIAL MEDIA



Red Flags

- Excessive time online (3+ hours daily) and compulsive checking
- Lurking and upward social comparison
- Connecting with unhealthy groups (e.g. eating disorders)
- Sudden decline in self-esteem



What can parents do?

Teach healthy social media use:

- How to differentiate between helpful and harmful content
- Emphasize that anything on social media can stay there forever



Resources

[APA Health Advisory on Social Media Use in Adolescence](#)

[The Mediatrician's Guide](#)

Keep in mind:
Kids think these are “harmless,” but...

- Social media use exceeding 3 hours a day is linked to greater mental health concerns
- Vapes are 3x more potent than they were 5 years ago; up to 2,000 toxins are inhaled into the lungs with every hit

5 NICOTINE



Red Flags

- Any nicotine use is unhealthy for the developing brain
- Daily vaping/smoking
- Vaping at school
- Larger tank-based models (“mods”)



What can parents do?

Enhance motivation to quit:

- Clarify goals and values
- Explore negative consequences of vaping
- Refer to pediatrician for medication evaluation
- Find other strategies to meet emotional needs



Resources

[This is Quitting](#)

[SmokeFree Teen](#)

Learn more:



[A Change in Mentality](#)
(Psychology Today Blog)

www.weinerphd.com



Addiction is complicated.

Understanding it doesn't have to be.