

THEY'RE CALLED "GATEWAY" FOR A REASON

People do not wake up one day and decide they are going to start ingesting heroin or other illegal drugs. For most, substance abuse begins with the Big-3: alcohol, tobacco and marijuana. Regularly looked at as less harmful, "legal" (age-specific), or even acceptable, these "gateway drugs" often are the first step to a lifelong battle. Take for example alcohol...Studies show that the earlier a person starts using alcohol (no matter who they are drinking with) the more likely they are to have troubles with alcohol as adults.

STUDIES SHOW...

Talk to your kids about why you want them to make good, healthy choices. Start the conversation early. Parents are more influential than you think. LISTEN (You were given two ears and one mouth for a reason!). GET INVOLVED in their world. And SET LIMITS. For more ideas, visit www.drugfree.org/prevent.

INTERVENE AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE

Make no mistake. Casual drug use can quickly turn to drug abuse, dependence and addiction.

Signs of alcohol or drug use could include:

PERSONALITY CHANGES

- Verbally/physically abusive, extreme mood swings, depressed or more isolated than usual. Secretive or lying, stealing or "losing" items of value, asking for or having a lot of money
- Withdraws from family, friends or other activities they used to enjoy

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

- Not taking care of hygiene or grooming
- Changes in sleeping habits, appetite, weight, or energy

SOCIAL OR SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

- Changing social circles, dropping old friends or activities. Low grades and interest in school, skipping or sleeping in class
- Loses concentration or has trouble remembering things