

Worried About a Friend's Use of Alcohol or Drugs?

Use this brief questionnaire to review your friend's drinking behavior. Although the questions refer to a friend's drinking, they can apply as well to a family member or oneself.

How can I recognize signs of an alcohol/drug problem in someone I care about?

Please check all that apply:

- Drinking/using to calm nerves, forget worries or boost a sad mood
- Guilt about drinking/using or their behavior while under the influence
- Unsuccessful attempts to cut down/stop drinking or using
- Lying about or hiding drinking/using habits (frequency, amount)
- Causing harm to oneself or someone else as a result of their use
- Needing to drink or use increasingly greater amounts in order to achieve desired effect
- Feeling irritable, resentful or unreasonable when not using or when unable to use
- Medical, academic, social, family or financial problems caused by using
- Spending a great deal of time getting alcohol/drugs, drinking alcohol/using drugs, recovering from its effects, and thinking and planning to use
- Drinking/using in risky situations such as before driving

If you checked any of the items above, please consider talking with a health professional. Someone doesn't have to be an alcoholic or drug addict to have a drinking or drug problem. Help is available both for you and your friend.

What to do if you think a friend may have a problem with alcohol/drugs:

Talking to someone about a substance abuse problem can be a difficult task. Sometimes the concerns expressed by friends are just what someone needs to get help and make behavior changes.

- **Let your friend know** risky drinking/using behavior can lead to more severe problems including dependence (alcoholism/addiction), as well as injuries, other medical issues and problems with school/relationships/family/legal/finances. Make sure you remember that your problem is with their behavior, not with them personally.
- **Seek resources** on campus to help your friend. Talk to a clinician at the health or counseling center, a residence hall staff member or someone you know and trust. Ask the health center staff what resources are available for your friend and how to motivate him/her to use them.
- **Use the resources.** Do what you can to encourage your friend to use the resources you identify but remember the only person you can change is yourself. If you think you need help due to a friend's drinking/using don't hesitate to seek it.
- **Don't make excuses** for your friend's behavior. Many people try to protect the people they care about from the consequences of their drinking/using behavior by making excuses to others. Making excuses prevents your friend from making changes for the better.
- **Choose a good time to talk** with your friend, such as soon after an alcohol/drug-related problem has occurred. Choose a time when he or she is sober, when you are both calm and when you can speak privately.
- **Be specific.** Tell the friend that you are concerned about his/her drinking/using and want to be supportive in getting help. Back up your concern with specific examples of the ways in which his/her drinking/using has caused problems for both of you, including the most recent incident. Be prepared for any reaction from your friend – anger, defensiveness, denial or agreement. You may have to talk to them more than once. Be prepared to tell them how their alcohol or drug use is affecting you.

- **Remember that you are not alone.** There are many people and resources on campus and in the community that can support your effort to help a friend. If your friend continues to deny that there is a problem, then you may have to set some limits with them.