

Don't go it alone.
Help is a phone call away.

To make an appointment with Addiction Services, please call 330-543-5015 or talk to your child's primary care doctor.

For urgent needs, contact the United Way Help Center at **2-1-1**.

For more information

akronchildrens.org/addiction



This brochure is not intended as a substitute for your health professional's opinion or care. It was created in part by a donation from Fighting for Alyssa, a nonprofit that raises awareness about substance use disorder, and advocates for education and treatment.



Teens using drugs and alcohol

Helping families, saving lives



Addiction is a brain disease that hurts people and their families. Teens who get addicted to drugs or alcohol can get better, with help from Akron Children's.

Substance use versus substance abuse

When a teen uses drugs or alcohol, it can hurt how their brain grows. This can make school harder and cause problems later in life.

Here are the stages of drug and alcohol use:

- **Substance use** is when a teen drinks alcohol or tries drugs, even one time. It might not lead to addiction, but there's always a risk.
- **Substance misuse** is when a teen uses drugs or alcohol in a dangerous way — like binge drinking or taking more medicine than they should. They might need more to feel the same, and they may feel sick when they stop.
- **Substance use disorder** is a strong addiction that changes the brain. A teen with addiction can't stop using drugs or alcohol, even when it causes big problems.



How to talk to your teen about drugs and alcohol

Parents are the biggest influence in a teen's life. Teens with involved parents are much less likely to smoke, drink or use drugs. That's why having a strong, honest and trusting relationship can help your teen stay away from drugs and alcohol. The most important thing is to talk early and often.

Here are some ways to talk with your teen without sounding like you're giving a lecture:

- Listen to your teen without cutting them off.
- Ask questions that start with why, how or what — instead of questions they can answer with "yes" or "no."
- Stay calm and don't get angry.
- Use a kind voice and make sure your body looks relaxed.
- Respect your teen's thoughts and feelings.
- Let your teen know if anyone in your family has had problems with drugs or alcohol.
- Help your teen learn what to do, not just what to avoid.

What is addiction?

Addiction is when someone can't stop using something even though it's hurting them. Addiction changes how the brain works, making the person crave the drugs or alcohol more and more. That's why people with addiction often need help from doctors, counselors, or support groups to get better.

The important thing to understand is that addiction is a medical condition, not a choice or a sign that someone is weak. With the right help and treatment, people can recover from addiction.

Signs your teen may be using drugs or alcohol

If your teen starts behaving differently for no known reason, it could be a sign of alcohol or drug use. Look for these warning signs:

- Alcohol, smoke or other chemical odors on your teen or their friends' breath or clothes.
- Hanging out with new friends.
- Not caring about how they look.
- Changes in how much they eat or sleep.
- A sudden weight gain or loss.
- Trouble at school such as getting bad grades or skipping classes.
- Losing interest in activities they used to enjoy.
- Sudden mood changes, more arguments and unexplained violent actions.

Akron Children's Addiction Services Program

Although we care for patients up to age 18 with substance use issues, our goal is to prevent teens from getting addicted. We do this by working with Akron Children's primary care offices and school health programs to teach students about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. We give parents tips on how to store medicine safely at home. We also follow prescription guidelines to make sure we give the right amount of medicine to each patient.

Treatment options

Outpatient Program

We help patients who have problems with drugs, alcohol or their mental health. We offer:

- Medicine to help with withdrawal symptoms.
- Urine tests to check for drug use.
- Weekly one-on-one and family counseling, if needed.

At the first visit, the patient will meet with a licensed counselor who knows a lot about drug and alcohol problems. This visit can take up to 60 minutes. If needed, we will set up another visit with a doctor who treats addiction. To make it easy for families, we offer appointments after school and online.

Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP)

IOP is for teens who have a tough time staying away from drugs or alcohol. A licensed clinician will learn about the teen's mental health and past drug or alcohol use. This step ensures the IOP is the right level of care. If it is, the IOP includes:

- Group therapy for six to nine hours each week.
- Ongoing one-on-one and family counseling.
- Urine tests to check for drug use.
- Help with planning care and support.
- Care from a doctor who treats addiction.

IOP patients meet three times a week for about four to six weeks. Teens learn how to stay sober, avoid using again and build a strong support system.



How substance use disorder affects a growing brain

When using drugs, the brain releases feel-good chemicals that can make it hard for the teen to stay in control and make good choices. Over time, the drug use affects parts of the brain that help with feeling happy, staying motivated and remembering things. Teens may want the drug so much that they keep using, even if it's causing problems.

Why can't my adolescent just stop?

When addiction takes over, the drug or alcohol changes the brain's function. These changes can leave your teen vulnerable to different triggers that make them want to use again. Therefore, your child cannot just stop an addiction. They need help.

If left untreated, the addiction can get worse and even threaten your teen's life. The good news is that the right treatment and tools can help your teen manage the disease.