

5 signs your grown up child might be suffering with addiction



This summer, thousands of university and college students up and down the country will be returning home following the end of another academic year – an exciting prospect for many parents whose children have 'flown the nest'.

It's undoubtable that moving away from home opens a number of doors to young people, introducing them to new friends, hobbies and – most notably – unprecedented levels of freedom. But, although the **infamous uni lifestyle** is *relatively* harmless, it's pretty safe to assume that most higher education students will, at some point, be introduced to illegal drugs or substances of some form. Indeed, polls conducted by UK-wide University publication *The Tab* shows that the majority of students report trying drugs.

With this in mind, it's important to keep a subtle eye out for any signs of **addiction** among your children – especially ones who are returning home

following their first year away. Here, addiction expert Dr Indra Cidambi gives her tips on spotting the early signs of substance abuse.

"Adolescents slip into addiction to deal with stress or to be "accepted" by a "cool group. So, it is important to talk to your kids to understand what is going on in their lives...helping them sort out feelings and fostering an environment where they turn to you first for help in solving a problem."

1. Behavioural and mood issues

Substance abuse in young adults can often result in **changes in social interactions**, mood changes, problems with work and an increase in risky behavior or mood swings. Dr Cidambi says:

"The changes in social interactions are very noticeable. If your extroverted child suddenly now keeps more to himself/herself and avoids eye contact, it should be a concern. If he or she is now sullen, irritable or depressed, then it could be a warning sign."

Also, any drastic deterioration in your child's academic performance should be explored.

2. Unkempt appearance

Ok, so we all know that students aren't necessarily the most well turned-presented people, but Dr Cidambi says that if your child's appearance actually causes you to do a double-take, then there might be something going on.

"If he or she has become careless about their clothing, has an unkempt appearance and has a perennially runny nose, you should think about having a conversation."

While it can be difficult to mentally accept the fact that your child is taking on the appearance of an addict, it is important to address changes in appearance, especially red or glassy eyes, unexplained marks on arms or legs (long sleeves in warm weather to hide marks), and continuous scratching or picking of face and arms.



3. Avoiding old friends

As children evolve into adults, find new hobbies and spend time away from home, it's inevitable that they will find new friends. However, it's a good sign if they connect with their high school friends when they're back for summer, while a search for new friends when back home may suggest a problem. Dr Cidambi says:

"If an addiction is consuming your child's life, they may avoid their high school friends when they come back home, as they no longer affirm your child's new lifestyle."

4. Lack of interest

Again, it's natural for children to return home with new hobbies and interests, but keep an eye on them if they now totally shun something they previously enjoyed.

"If you find that your child no longer enjoys their usual activities, it may be that he or she has become pre-occupied with obtaining and using drugs or alcohol and it is taking over all aspects of their life."

5. Change in eating habits

Dr Cidambi says that parents (who generally take on the role of 'the hand that feeds') tend to notice this effect of addiction fairly quickly. Depending on the substance in question, your child can experience an array of new

food habits, including binge eating, also known as the 'munchies', or a decrease in appetite.