

Information Brief

Physical Clues of Alcohol or Other Drug Abuse

Here is what you look for:

- Packets of rolling papers, for smoking marijuana;
- Roach clips, also called alligator clips, used for clamping the tiny end of a marijuana butt, so that can be inhaled without burning one's fingers;
- Water pipes, or bongs, which are usually glass and range in size from several inches to over a foot. They are constructed in three sections - pipe, bowl, and water chamber. They are used for smoking hashish, hash oil, and to freebase cocaine;
- Syringes, for injecting narcotics, cocaine, amphetamines, barbiturates and even alcohol.
- Small spoons, sometimes made of silver or gold, for sniffing powders such as cocaine.

Not all paraphernalia is so exotic. Some are everyday household items such as:

- Plastic bags, baggies, zip-loc pouches, glass in envelopes, aluminum foil strips, small bottles, boxes, and vials, all used to store, or "stash" marijuana, pills, tablets, capsules, powders, and solutions;
- Desktop scales, for weighing marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and other drugs;
- Razor blades, used to cut drugs such as cocaine, blocks of hashish, pills, and tablets;
- Kitchen spoons and bottle caps burnt black on the bottom, in which narcotics and/or other substances have been cooked over a flame;
- Blood-stained pieces of cotton, indicative of intravenous drug use;
- Over-the-counter eye drops for clearing bloodshot eyes;
- Containers of rubbing alcohol, used to sterilize needles and to rub on skin abscesses;
- More conventional pipes made of wood, metal, plastic and paper;
- Burn holes on clothing or furniture from dropped joints; butane lighters and matches, for heating narcotics and other substances; also for lighting pipes, joints, cigarettes.

Maintain careful inventory of alcohol and prescription drugs. Also, be aware of smells such as marijuana's and hashish's sweet scents; the acrid odor of burnt cooking implements; the pungency of sulphur from matches; incense and room deodorizers, for masking alcohol and smoke; and mouthwash on your child's breath, for covering up alcohol or other drugs.