

# Physician Fact Sheet on Substance Abuse in Persons with MR/DD

1. Individuals with mild mental retardation abuse substances with equal frequency to persons with normal intellect.
2. Adolescents and young adults with mild mental retardation have a similar pattern of substance abuse to their intellectually normal counterparts.
3. Alcohol and marijuana are the most commonly abused substances for persons with mild mental retardation; however, persons with moderate to severe retardation should not have access to substances of abuse.
4. Substance abuse can produce multiple psychiatric symptoms, including psychosis, depression, agitation, and behavioral problems.
5. Any young patient with an acute onset of behavioral problems or psychiatric symptoms should have serum and urine toxicology screens for drugs of abuse.
6. Abrupt onset of hostility, psychosis, or schizophrenic-like symptoms in persons with mild retardation may be produced by methamphetamine abuse.
7. Persons with mild mental retardation and attention deficit disorder are at risk for abusing prescribed psychostimulants.
8. The rate of substance abuse in older persons with mild mental retardation is unknown, although alcohol abuse is probably most common.
9. Nicotine addiction is a common problem in persons with mild and moderate retardation and patients may smoke, dip or chew tobacco products.
10. Nicotine withdrawal can produce significant behavioral problems in some addicted patients with MR/DD.