

SUBSTANCE ABUSE



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

The continuing misuse of any mind altering substances or chemicals. There is a loss of self-control and a compulsion to continue despite adverse personal, physical, mental, and social outcomes that may result.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Depends on the substance of abuse. Most produce:

- A temporary pleasant mood.
- Relief from anxiety.
- False feelings of self-confidence and being in control.
- Increased sensitivity to sights and sounds (including hallucinations).
- Altered activity levels—either lethargy and sleeplike states, or frenzied states (being very active).
- Unpleasant or painful symptoms when the abused substance is no longer used (withdrawal).
- Tolerance (need more of the substance to get “high”).
- People may observe new and odd behavior changes.

CAUSES

- Substances of abuse may produce addiction or dependence. Common substances of abuse include:
 - Nicotine and alcohol.
 - Marijuana.
 - Amphetamines; barbiturates; cocaine.
 - Opiates. These include codeine, heroin, opium, morphine, methadone, hydrocodone, and oxycodone.
 - Psychedelic or hallucinogenic drugs (club drugs), including PCP (“angel dust”), mescaline, GHB, and LSD.
 - Volatile substances, such as glue, solvents, and paints that are inhaled.
 - Misuse of the cough remedy dextromethorphan.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Family history of drug or alcohol abuse.
- Family problems (conflict, stress, lack of closeness, poor parenting, loss of job, physical or sexual abuse).
- Genetic factors (may be more prone to addiction).
- Peer pressure, especially in teenagers.
- Fatigue or overwork; problems at work or school.
- Ease of obtaining the substances of abuse.
- Emotional problems, including depression, dependency, poor self-esteem, anxiety, and stress.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Don't socialize with persons who abuse drugs.
- Get medical help for emotional or mental problems.
- Caring parents need to help kids stay drug free.
- Drug education and prevention programs.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

Successful recovery from substance abuse can improve all aspects of one's life. It is not easy, but it can be done.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Accidents, infections and other health problems.
- Loss of job or family. Legal problems.
- Relapse to using substance of abuse.
- Death caused by overdose.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Treatment can be voluntary or involuntary. Family, legal, or job factors may lead a person into treatment.
- Your health care provider may do a physical exam. Medical tests may include blood studies and substance abuse screening studies.
- No single treatment works for everyone. A plan needs to address the person's type of abuse, their physical and emotional health, and job, social, and legal aspects. A person is rarely able to quit without some help.
- The plan may require a combination of counseling, drug therapy, other medical services, family therapy, parenting instruction, job training, social and legal services. Treatment may take 3 months, or up to a year.
- Counseling (group or alone) is important in recovery.
- Physical symptoms of withdrawal will be treated.
- You may be monitored for use of the substance of abuse during treatment.
- Join local support group (e.g., Narcotics Anonymous).
- Learn more: National Clearinghouse for Alcohol & Drug Information, (800) 729-6686; website: www.health.org.

MEDICATION

Your health care provider may prescribe drugs to help you through withdrawal symptoms. Other drugs may be prescribed to treat emotional or mental problems.

ACTIVITY

No limits. Try to exercise 20 to 30 minutes every day.

DIET

Eat a normal, well-balanced diet. Take vitamins.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has a problem with, or has symptoms of, substance abuse.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page