

Alcohol Abuse

Alcohol is the most commonly used addictive substance. 1 in every 12 American adults is suffering from alcohol abuse or dependence. There is a difference between alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence. Addiction is a complicated brain disorder. It happens when a person is regularly seeking and using the substance. This damaging pattern can affect performance at home and work. It can also affect physical and mental health. It can damage relationships, cause trouble with the law and cause health issues.

What is alcohol addiction?

Alcohol addiction occurs when a person has a uncontrollable urge to drink alcohol and because of that use, has problems in multiple areas of their life.

Do you have a drinking problem?

You may have a drinking problem if you:

- Feel shame and guilt about your drinking.
- Lie to others to hide your drinking.
- Are confronted by those close to you worried about your drinking.
- Need to drink to relax.
- Experience behavior changes when you drink.
- Don't remember what happened while drinking.
- Hide alcohol containers.

Drinking and denial go together

Denying you have a problem is part of the process. If you have a drinking problem you may deny it by:

- Underestimating how much you really drink.
- Minimizing the effect of your drinking.
- Thinking your family and friends are exaggerating about how much you drink.
- Making up excuses for missing work.

Causes

The cause of alcoholism and alcohol abuse is a complicated set of factors. It may include family genes, surroundings and emotional health. Those who suffer from a mental health condition are also at higher risk. They may use alcohol to feel better.

Treatment

The first step in getting treatment is admitting you have a problem. Getting support is the next step. Talk to your doctor. There are a variety of treatments available. These may include self-help, (Alcoholics Anonymous; www.indyaa.org), inpatient treatment and therapy. There are medicines that help with cravings. Recovery is an ongoing process. Talk to your health professional to discuss options

Helping someone with alcoholism

There may be painful emotions when trying to help a loved one with alcoholism. You may experience a wave of different feelings. You will need to take care of yourself during this difficult time. Al-Anon/Ala-Teen is a free support group that helps deal with these emotions. You will learn that:

- You cannot stop someone from drinking too much.
- You are not responsible for someone else's alcohol abuse.
- Your loved one may not be able to stop and stay sober without help.

Where can I go for help?

- Alcoholics Anonymous (www.aa.org), is a free 12 step program that helps alcoholics.
- Al-Anon (www.al-anon.alateen.org) is a support group for families of alcoholics.