

Drug Abuse

Drug abuse is using medicine from your doctor in a way that it was not meant to be used. When you become addicted to a drug, you start to crave it. There is a difference between using drugs and becoming addicted. Some people can use drugs and not become addicted, and others cannot. Drug addiction is a complex brain disorder. Different drugs have different effects on your body. One thing all drugs have in common is using them often can cause your brain to look and act different than normal.

Signs you may have a drug addiction

If you are addicted to something, that means you often use a substance even when it causes harm. Even though the substance is causing harm, it can still feel good to use it. Some signs you might have an addiction are:

- You don't take care of your responsibilities.
- You are in trouble with the law because of your drug use.
- You use drugs in an unsafe place or situation.
- Your drug use is causing problems at school, at home, at work or with your friends and family.

Why do some people become addicted to drugs and others don't?

Using drugs often can cause your brain to change over time. These changes can affect your self-control and make you feel like you need the drug. Some people are more likely to get addicted to drugs than others. There are many reasons for this, including:

- People in your family are or have been addicted to drugs.
- Being abused or neglected when you were young.
- Having depression or anxiety.
- Starting using drugs when you were young.
- The way the drug is used. Smoking or injecting drugs makes them more addictive.

How can I help if someone I know has an addiction?

Helping someone you know who has an addiction can be hard, but it can also be a good thing. Trying to make them feel better by making them think they don't have a problem will not help them. Try to get help right away.

Do:

- Learn all about their addiction.
- Talk to them and try to be positive. Don't wait until they hit "rock bottom". Tell them why you are worried about them and give them examples of things they do that worry you.
- Encourage them to get help from a doctor for their addiction, even if they say they can stop using drugs on their own.
- Give them support. Once they stop using drugs, they will need your support more than ever.

Don't:

- Make them feel guilty or act like you know better than them.
- Cover up or make excuses for them.
- Take over their responsibilities.
- Argue with them while they are on the drug.
- Feel guilty that they are using drugs. It's not your fault.
- Use drugs with them.

Treatment

The first step in recovering from drug abuse is admitting there is a problem. Recovery means different things to different people. It can take time, courage and patience. The next step is talking to your doctor. Your doctor can help you decide the best way to work on your recovery. Your doctor may suggest therapy or support groups. Free support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) are also available. You can talk to your family, friends, church and doctor for help.

How drug abuse can affect your health

Drug abuse can cause lots of health problems, like:

- Feeling unhealthy or sick a lot.
- Having an irregular heart beat or a heart attack.
- If you inject drugs, you might damage your veins. You may get an infection in your blood vessels or your heart.
- Liver damage.
- Nausea, vomiting and belly pain.

Help is available

- Call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Helpline at **800-662-HELP (4357)** at any time. They can give you information about local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations.
- Go to www.naindiana.org/home.php to find a Narcotics Anonymous meeting near you.