

## Drug Abuse

Drug abuse is the use of medicine for any other reason than what it is intended for. Drug dependence causes the body to crave the drug. There is a difference between using drugs and becoming addicted. Some people can use drugs and not become addicted. Others cannot. Drug addiction is a complicated brain disorder. Drugs have different physical effects. One thing they all have in common is repeatedly using them can cause the brain to look and act differently.

### Signs you may have a drug addiction

Addiction is repeatedly using a substance even when it causes harm. This is because using the substance gave, or still gives, some pleasure or value.

- Not taking care of your responsibilities.
- You are in legal trouble due to drug use.
- Using drugs in a dangerous or unsafe situation or environment.
- Drug use is causing problems at school, home, work and in relationships.

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

Although the original decision to take drugs is voluntary for most people, the brain changes over time. These changes can affect the person's self-control and they may not be able to stop the impulse to take drugs. Some people are more likely to become a drug addict than others. There are many reasons for this. They may include:

- Family history of drug addiction.
- Neglect, abuse or trauma in childhood.
- Having depression and/or anxiety.
- Using drugs at an early age.
- 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 love get help with an addiction can be difficult but also rewarding. Denying or minimizing the addiction will not help them. Do not delay in getting help.

#### Do:

- Learn all about the addiction
- Offer support and recognize the addiction.
- Speak up and offer love. Don't wait until they hit "rock bottom". Tell them why you are concerned with specific examples.
- They will need treatment to stop the addiction but may try to say they can stop on their own. Encourage them to seek the treatment needed.
- Support their recovery process. Once they are in treatment they will need your ongoing support.

#### Don't:

- Lecture, threaten, bribe or preach to them.
- Emotionally blackmail them or use guilt to get them to stop.
- Cover up or make excuses for them
- Take over their responsibilities.
- Argue when using drugs impairs reasoning.
- Feel guilty or responsible for their behavior, it's not your fault.
- Join them in their use.

## Treatment

The first step in getting treatment is admitting there is a problem. Recovery means different things to different people, and can take time, courage and patience. The next step is talking with your health care provider. There are options available to begin the recovery process. Inpatient treatment, therapy and support groups may be suggested. Free support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) are also available. Reach out to family, friends, church and health care providers to start the recovery process.

### Drug abuse affects health

Abusing drugs may cause these health problems:

- General health gets worse.
- Irregular heart beat or heart attack.
- Injection of drugs may cause damage to veins, infection of blood vessels and heart valves.
- Liver damage.
- Nausea, vomiting and belly pain.

### Help is available

- Call NCAAD Hope Line for immediate assistance at **1-800-622-2255**.
- Go to [www.naindiana.org/home.php](http://www.naindiana.org/home.php) to find a Narcotics Anonymous meeting near you.