



### **Are You or a Loved One Addicted?**

Has your alcohol or drug use become a problem? There is a difference between alcohol use, substance abuse that is harmful, and addiction.

If the use of alcohol and/or drugs has begun to create problems in your life or the lives of those you care about, you may be experiencing a substance abuse disorder.

### **Warning Signs**

Do you find yourself being untruthful about how much or how often you drink or use drugs? Do you get drunk, stoned, or high almost every day? Do you ever drink alone, first thing in the morning, at work, or in risky situations such as operating a vehicle or machinery?

Has substance abuse caused a change in your appearance like discolored eyes, broken capillaries, flushed skin, or accelerated aging?

If you have tried to quit drinking or using drugs and have suffered from panic attacks, insomnia, nausea, diarrhea, sweating, tremors and shaking, nightmares, hallucinations, headaches, or other distressing withdrawal symptoms, you could be addicted.

Difficulty dealing with problems and stress without using drugs or alcohol is also a red flag of a developing disorder. Do you feel that you have to drink or use drugs just to feel normal? Can you go on vacation or to a celebration event without getting drunk or high? Are you irritable and depressed when you are not using?

If you find that you have begun to lose control over your drug or alcohol use, or that you are drinking and drugging

more than you intended to, using when you don't really want to, or staying drunk or high for longer periods than you meant to, you may be in the first stages of addiction.

### **Damaged Relationships**

Has your substance use caused problems and arguments with the people closest to you in your life? Have you had the same fight over and over again with loved ones about your drug or alcohol use?

Do you feel closed off and isolated from others? Does it seem like no one understands and there is no one you can reach out to for help?

Have you broken promises to friends or family members after you said you would not drink or get stoned? A substance abuse disorder makes it difficult to trust yourself and for others to trust you.

If using drugs and drinking has changed the way you live your life—if it is keeping you from spending time with friends and family, it's time to get help.

### **Risk Factors**

Some people are more prone to substance abuse disorders than others. A family history of addiction can substantially increase a person's chances of becoming addicted. If you have a grandparent, parent, aunt, uncle, or sibling who struggled with drugs or alcohol, you may want to talk to a professional about your genetic history.

Certain psychological factors can also increase the chances of addiction. Stress, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and other psychiatric disorders are all risk factors.

Being a victim of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse can put a person at greater risk of addiction. Exposure to trauma, substance abuse among family and friends, easy access to addictive substances, and even exposure to popular culture references that encourage drug use are all risk factors.

Beginning to use alcohol, nicotine, and/or other drugs at an early age also increases the chances of substance abuse disorders and addiction.

If you or a loved one has one or more of these substance abuse risk factors, it does not mean that addiction will definitely occur, but it does mean that the chances are greater. The more risk factors present, the greater the chance that a person will develop the disease.

### **The Solution**

There can be lots of negative consequences to using and abusing alcohol and drugs, but there are many benefits to getting help.

Seeking treatment is the first—and often the most difficult—step in getting well. Addiction is not a choice, and just like a person suffering from depression can't stop feelings of sadness through willpower alone, it is extremely difficult for an addict to stop using without help.

Long-term drug and alcohol use alters the brain in ways that make it virtually impossible to stop substance abuse without professional

assistance. Excessive drug and alcohol use can create changes in the brain that cause powerful cravings and a compulsion to use that makes getting sober seem out of reach.

But the good news is: Intervention and recovery do work, and through treatment, millions of people have regained their will and ability to choose not to use alcohol and drugs.

No matter how hopeless the situation may seem, or how many times you might have tried and failed, with the right treatment and support it is possible to heal.

These organizations can help get you or a loved one on the path to recovery:

- Narcotics Anonymous: [www.na.org](http://www.na.org)
- Marijuana Anonymous: <http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org/>
- Methamphetamine Anonymous: <https://crystalmeth.org/index.php>
- Cocaine Anonymous: <https://ca.org/>
- Call the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) helpline at: 1-800-662-4357
- To get one-on-one help to address your child's substance abuse, call the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids helpline at: 1-855-378-4373