

MANAGING YOUR DRUG USE DISORDER

What Is Drug Use Disorder?

Abuse of prescription and illicit drugs is a major problem in the United States. Three terms related to abuse need definitions: tolerance, physical addiction, and psychological addiction.

Tolerance means abusers need more drug to get the same effect as before or to avoid going through withdrawal.

Physical addiction exists with tolerance. People with physical addiction go through withdrawal when they stop using the drug. Symptoms of withdrawal include gooseflesh, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, rapid heartbeat, sweating, insomnia, and severe anxiety. Withdrawal from benzodiazepines, barbiturates, and alcohol can be life-threatening.

Psychological addiction means having a severe drug craving and using drug-seeking behaviors, such as forging prescriptions, faking illnesses, and using violence to get drugs.

What Are the Types of Drug Use Disorder?

Anyone can be an abuser. Unlike in the past, more women than men today are admitted to drug abuse programs.

Five types of drugs are commonly abused. Depressants make people feel down. They're strongly physically addicting. They include alcohol, barbiturates, opiates, other painkillers, and drugs such as meprobamate. Stimulants produce a high and can cause severe insomnia, restless feelings, and inability to sit still. Stimulants include cocaine (crack), amphetamines (such as methamphetamine), caffeine, over-the-counter drugs with pseudoephedrine, and diet pills. Hallucinogens cause people to see, hear, or feel things that are not actually there, or they make people misinterpret things. They're very dangerous. Hallucinogens include LSD, mescaline, and

psilocybin. Inhalants are huffed, snorted, or sniffed. Examples are gasoline, cleaning products, anesthetics (such as nitrous oxide), hair sprays, bug sprays, spray paints, solvents such as toluene, airplane glue, typewriter correction fluid, and kerosene. Teenagers often use these drugs, which are cheap and obtained easily. They can cause serious physical damage and strong drug craving and drug-seeking behaviors. PCP, or angel dust, can cause psychosis or depression, with flashbacks.

Other abused drugs include marijuana, designer drugs, and GHB (date rape drug).

How Is Drug Use Disorder Treated?

Treatment involves detoxification, education and keeping drug free, and peer support counseling. Support groups include Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA), and Narcotics Anonymous (NA). The main point of treatment is to stop drug abuse. Sometimes, other drugs are used to help stop the abuse. Education is often done in peer support groups with other drug abusers. Abusers need a sponsor, a former abuser who has had years of being clean. People should call their sponsors when they feel that they could relapse.

Some people have both a psychiatric condition and drug abuse. Both need treatment.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Drug Use Disorder

- ✓ **DO** tell your health care provider or emergency room health care provider that you're a recovering drug abuser.
- ✓ **DO** contact your health care provider or support group if you have strong urges to use drugs again (relapse warning signs).
- ✓ **DO** eat well, drink plenty of fluids, get enough rest, exercise moderately, and reduce stress during recovery.

✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you have seizures, psychosis, or suicidal thoughts.

⊗ **DON'T** take other medicines, including over-the-counter drugs, before checking with your health care provider.

⊗ **DON'T** see friends and relatives who abuse drugs or remind you of when you did.

Socialize with your sponsor and AA or NA members.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Tel: (800) 729-6686; Website: <http://ncadi.samhsa.gov/>
- Habit Smart: Website: <http://www.habitsmart.com>
- Cocaine Anonymous: Tel: (310) 559-5833; Website: <http://www.ca.org>
- Narcotics Anonymous: Tel: (818) 773-9999; Website: <http://www.na.org>

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