

Educational Links (English):

- ❖ <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/partnersincarecampaign/alcohol,drugsandaddiction.aspx>
- ❖ <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/cannabis.aspx>
- ❖ <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/clubdrugs.aspx>
- ❖ <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/mentalillness/offending.aspx>
- ❖ <http://www.samhsa.gov/disorders/substance-use>
- ❖ <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/what-to-look-for/substance-abuse/>
- ❖ <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/media-guide/science-drug-abuse-addiction-basics>
- ❖ <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/media-guide/most-commonly-used-addictive-drugs>

Support Groups:

- ❖ Narcotics Anonymous - <https://www.na.org/>
- ❖ NA – Orlando FL - <http://orlandona.org/>
- ❖ NA – Saint Cloud FL - <http://www.narcotics.com/na-meetings/florida/saint-cloud/>



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Lumos Psychiatric Services



Educational Booklet: Substance Use Disorders

Substance use disorders is a chronic brain disease, often relapsed, characterized by the search and compulsive consumption of drugs despite the harmful consequences for the addicted person and those around him. While it is true that in the case of most people the initial decision to take drugs is voluntary, over time the changes that occur in the brains of addicted people can affect self-control and hinder their ability to resist intense impulses of using drugs.

Stopping drugs is not given with the simple intention or firm decision to do so. In fact, because drugs change the brain in such a way that they encourage compulsive abuse, stopping using them is difficult, even for those who are willing to do so.

Causes:

- ❖ **Genetic factors** - Studies have shown that substance addiction tends to occur in members of the same family, leading to the conclusion that there is a strong genetic link in the development of drug addiction and/or abuse alcohol. People with first-degree relatives (such as siblings or biological parents) who have battled addiction to any type of substance face an increased risk of developing an addiction.
- ❖ **Physical Factors** - The chemical composition of drugs and alcohol has an effect on the brain's communication system and causes disorders in the way cells normally process information. The longer the substance abuse lasts, the more likely this is to cause lasting damage to the composition of this communication system, leading to physical dependence.

- ❖ **Environmental Factors** -Many addiction specialists and mental health professionals believe that environmental factors can determine whether or not a person will develop a drug and/or alcohol addiction. For example, individuals who experience chronic stress in their daily lives may get a sense of relief when using the drugs. In addition, people who have been victims of physical and/or sexual abuse may develop a dependence on these substances, as this helps to numb them at memories of negative experiences they suffered.

Symptoms:

Behavioral changes, for example:

- ❖ Decrease attendance and performance at school
- ❖ Get into trouble frequently (fights, accidents, illegal activities)
- ❖ Using substances in situations that pose a physical hazard, for example, while driving or operating a machine
- ❖ Acting either in secret or suspiciously
- ❖ Show changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- ❖ Exhibiting unexplained changes in personality or attitude
- ❖ Demonstrate mood changes, irritability or bursts of anger
- ❖ Go through unusual periods of hyperactivity, agitation or lightheadedness
- ❖ Not motivated
- ❖ Show yourself fearful, anxious or paranoid, for no reason

Physical changes, for example:

- ❖ Bloodshot eyes and abnormally sized pupils
- ❖ Sudden weight loss or gain
- ❖ Impairment of physical appearance
- ❖ Unusual smells in breath, body or clothing
- ❖ Tremors, inarticulate speech or atrophied coordination

Social changes, for example:

- ❖ Sudden change of friends, favorite meeting places and hobbies
- ❖ Legal problems linked to substance use
- ❖ Need for unexplained money or financial problems
- ❖ Substance use even though they create problems in relationships

Treatment:

1. Detoxification (the process in which the body is cleaned from the drug)
2. Behavioral counseling
3. Medications (for addiction to opioids, tobacco and alcohol)
4. Evaluation and treatment of con-current mental disorders such as depression and anxiety
5. Long-term monitoring to prevent a relapse

Several care approaches within a personalized treatment program with options for monitoring can be crucial to success. Treatment should include physical and mental health services as needed. Follow-up care may include a recovery system based on community or family support.

Prevention:

Substance use disorder is a preventability disease. The results of research sponsored by the National Institute on Drug Abuse have shown that prevention programs involving family, school, community and the media are effective in reducing drug abuse. While there are many cultural events and factors that affect drug abuse trends, when young people perceive drug use to be harmful, there is a decline in the tendency to use them. Therefore, education and community activism are key to helping young people and the general public understand the risks of drug abuse. Teachers, parents, doctors and other public health professionals should continue to send the message that drug addiction can be avoided if the person never uses drugs.

For questions or concerns, discuss it with your doctor.