

*Patient Education Sheet***How Can I Get Help for Someone with an Addiction Problem?****How can I be helpful to someone with an addiction problem?**

If you are worried about a friend, child, or spouse who has an addiction, the tips in this education sheet are helpful. Let the person know that you are available to talk or offer your support. If you notice the person backsliding (relapsing), talk about it openly and ask what you can do to help. If your friend or significant other will not accept your help, do not be afraid to talk to a trusted friend, licensed professional or counselor.

Relatives and friends need support to continue being helpful. A drinking or drug problem is a family affair and is hard for everyone involved. Above all, offer your loved one, who is battling an addiction, lots of encouragement and praise. It may seem corny, but hearing that you care is just the kind of motivation someone might need most.

How do I help someone with an addiction to stay "clean" or sober?

Recovering from a drug or alcohol addiction does not end with a 6-week treatment program. It is a lifelong process. Many people find that joining a support group can help them to avoid substance use. There are support groups specifically for teens and younger people as well as for adults. These groups allow the person with an addiction to meet people who have gone through the same experiences. There is the opportunity to participate in real-life discussions about

drugs that the person may not hear anywhere else.

Many people find that helping others is also the best way to help themselves. Your understanding of how difficult the recovery process can be will help you to support others too! Both teens and adults who are battling an addiction need support from lots of different sources.

If the person does have a relapse, it is critical to recognize the problem as soon as possible. Knowing what triggers a relapse is also important in postponing the relapse. Help the person with an addiction to stay away from triggers and to get help right away if relapse occurs.

If someone is unwilling to get help, what can I do about it?

This can be a challenge. No one can be forced to get help except under certain circumstances, such as a traffic violation or arrest that results in court-ordered treatment. But you do not have to wait for someone to "hit rock bottom" to act. Many alcoholism and drug treatment specialists suggest the following steps to help someone get treatment:

1. **Stop all "cover ups."** Family members often make excuses to others or try to protect the love one from the results of his or her drinking. It is important to stop covering up so that he or she experiences the full consequences of the addiction.
2. **Time your intervention.** The best time to talk is shortly after an alcohol or drug-related problem has occurred--like a serious family argument or an accident.

Choose a time when he or she is sober, both of you are fairly calm, and you have a chance to talk in private.

3. **Be specific.** Tell the family member that you are worried about his or her drinking. Use examples of the ways in which the drinking has caused problems, including the most recent incident as well as the effects on family and friends.
4. **State the results.** Explain to the drinker what you will do if he or she does not go for help. Try not to have it seem like a punishment but rather to protect yourself from his or her problems. What you say may range from refusing to go with the person to any social activity where alcohol will be served, to moving out of the house or having the person move from the house should they continue using. Do not make any threats you are not prepared to carry out.
5. **Get help.** Gather information in advance about treatment options in your community. If the person is willing to get help, call immediately for an appointment with a treatment counselor. Offer to go with the family member on the first visit to a treatment program and/or an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting.
6. **Call on a friend.** If the family member still refuses to get help, ask a friend to talk with the person using the steps just described. A friend who is a recovering alcoholic or drug addict may be particularly persuasive, but any person who is caring and nonjudgmental may help. The intervention of more than one person, more than one time, is often necessary to coax a person with an addiction problem to seek help.
7. **Find strength in numbers.** With the help of a health care professional, some families join with other relatives and friends to confront a person with an

addiction problem as a group. This approach should only be tried under the guidance of a health care professional who is experienced in this kind of group intervention. Having all family members present at a family session/s to explain how the drinking or drug abuse is affecting the family is a very useful strategy.

8. **Get support.** It is important to remember that you are not alone. Support groups offered in most communities include Al-Anon, which holds regular meetings for spouses and other significant adults in an alcoholic's life, and Alateen, which is geared to children of alcoholics. These groups help family members understand that they are not responsible for an alcoholic's drinking and that they need to take steps to take care of themselves, regardless of whether the person with an addiction problem chooses to get help.

To get information about treatment programs in your local community and to speak to someone about an alcohol or drug problem, you can call the National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service ([Center for Substance Abuse Treatment](#)) at **800-662-HELP (4357)** for information about treatment programs in your local community

Source:

National Institutes of Health and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
5635 Fishers Lane, MSC 9304
Bethesda, MD 20892-9304
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