

*Patient Education Sheet***What are Substance Abuse and Addiction?****What are substance abuse and addiction?**

The difference between substance abuse and addiction is very slight. Substance abuse means using an illegal substance or miss using a legal substance. Addiction begins as abuse, or by using a substance like alcohol or marijuana. You can abuse alcohol or a drug without having an addiction.

However, abusing alcohol (beer, wine, liquor) or drugs can lead to an addiction.

Addiction means a person has no control over whether he or she uses a drug or drinks. Someone who is addicted has grown so used to the medication, substance or alcohol that he or she just has to have it.

People can become addicted to many substances. Addiction is usually associated with alcohol or illegal drugs. But people become addicted to other things, such as medications, cigarettes, and also glue. Some substances are more addictive than others. Illegal drugs like crack or heroin are so addictive that they might only be used once or twice before the user loses control.

Is addiction physical or psychological?

Addiction is both physical and psychological. Physical addiction is when a person's body actually becomes dependent on a particular substance (even smoking is physically addictive). It also means building tolerance to that substance, so that a person needs a larger dose than ever before to get

the same effects. Someone who is physically addicted and stops using a substance like drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes may experience withdrawal symptoms. Common symptoms of withdrawal are diarrhea, shaking, and generally feeling awful.

Psychological addiction happens when the cravings for a drug are emotional. People who are psychologically addicted feel overcome by the desire to have a drug. They may even begin to lie or steal to get it.

A person crosses the line between abuse and addiction when he or she is no longer trying the drug to have fun or get high, but has come to depend on it. His or her whole life may begin to center around the need for the drug. An addicted person no longer feels like there is a choice in taking the substance or drink.

What are the signs of addiction?

The most obvious sign of an addiction is the need to have a particular drug or substance. Signs that you or someone you know may have a drug or alcohol addiction include:

Physical signals:

- Changes in sleeping habits
- Feeling shaky or sick when trying to stop
- Needing to take more of the substance to get the same effect

- Changes in eating habits, including weight loss or gain

Psychological signals:

- Use of drugs or alcohol as a way to forget problems or to relax
- Keeping the use or craving a secret from family and friends
- Loss of interest in activities that used to be important
- Problems with schoolwork, such as slipping grades or absences
- Changes in friendships, such as hanging out only with friends who use drugs
- Spending a lot of time figuring out how to get drugs
- Stealing or selling belongings to be able to afford drugs
- Failed attempts to stop taking drugs or drinking
- Anxiety, anger, or depression
- Mood swings, being very up and then very down

How do I get help?

If you think you're addicted to drugs or alcohol, recognizing that you have a problem is the first step in getting help. A lot of people think they can kick the problem on their own, but that does not work for most people. Find someone you trust to talk to about your habit. It may help to talk to a friend or a peer at your school or workplace at first. If you can't talk to your parents, partner or spouse, you might want to approach a school counselor, favorite

teacher, alcohol counselor, employee assistance therapist, relative, doctor, or religious leader. Unfortunately, overcoming addiction is not easy. Quitting drugs or drinking is probably going to be one of the hardest things you've ever done. It's not a sign of weakness if you need professional help from a trained drug counselor or therapist.

Most people who try to kick a drug or alcohol problem need professional assistance or a treatment program to do so. Once you start a treatment program, try these tips to make the road to recovery less bumpy:

- Tell your friends about your decision to stop drinking /using drugs. Your true friends will respect your decision. This might mean that you need to find a new group of friends who will be 100% supportive. Unless everyone decides to kick their drug habit at once, you probably won't be able to hang out with your drinking and drug buddies, in order to be successful.
- Ask your trusted friends or family to be available when you need them. You may need to call someone in the middle of the night just to talk. If you're going through a tough time, don't try to handle things on your own.
- When trying to stop using accepting the help from the family and friends who offer assistance, will be beneficial.

- Accept invitations only to events that you know won't involve drugs or alcohol. Going to the movies is probably safe, but you may want to skip a Friday night party until you're feeling more secure. Plan activities that don't involve drugs. Play sports, or take an art class or a college course with a friend.
- Have a plan about what you'll do if you find yourself in a place with drugs or alcohol. The temptation will be there sometimes, but if you know how you're going to handle it, you'll be OK. Establish a plan with your parents or siblings so that if you call home using a code, they'll know that your call is a signal you need a ride out of there.
- Remind yourself that having an addiction doesn't make you bad or weak. If you fall back into old patterns (backslide) a bit, talk to an your support person as soon as possible. There's nothing to be ashamed about, but it's important to get help soon so that all of the hard work you put into your recovery is not lost.
- Attend alcohol and/ or drug anonymous regularly. Sometimes going to daily groups can make a difference at first in being successful

Source:

National Institutes of Health and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
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05/2013

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