

Drug addiction (substance use disorder)

Drug addiction, also called substance use disorder, is a disease that affects a person's brain and behavior and leads to an inability to control the use of a legal or illegal drug or medication. Drug classes that are involved in SUD include:

alcohol; caffeine; cannabis; phencyclidine and other hallucinogens, such as arylcyclohexylamines; inhalants; opioids; sedatives, hypnotics, or anxiolytics; stimulants; tobacco; and other or unknown substances.

In 2017 globally 271 million people (5.5% of adults) were estimated to have used one or more illicit drugs.^[7] Of these 35 million had a substance use disorder.^[7] An additional 237 million men and 46 million women have [alcohol use disorder](#) as of 2016.^[8] In 2017 substance use disorders from illicit substances directly resulted in 585,000 deaths.^[7] Direct deaths from drug use, other than alcohol, have increased over 60 percent from 2000 to 2015.^[9] Alcohol use resulted in an additional 3 million deaths in 2016.

Symptoms

Drug addiction symptoms or behaviors include, among others:

1. Feeling that you have to use the drug regularly — daily or even several times a day
2. Having intense urges for the drug that block out any other thoughts
3. Over time, needing more of the drug to get the same effect
4. Taking larger amounts of the drug over a longer period of time than you intended
5. Making certain that you maintain a supply of the drug
6. Spending money on the drug, even though you can't afford it
7. Not meeting obligations and work responsibilities, or cutting back on social or recreational activities because of drug use
8. Continuing to use the drug, even though you know it's causing problems in your life or causing you physical or psychological harm
9. Doing things to get the drug that you normally wouldn't do, such as stealing

10. Driving or doing other risky activities when you're under the influence of the drug
11. Spending a good deal of time getting the drug, using the drug or recovering from the effects of the drug
12. Failing in your attempts to stop using the drug
13. Experiencing withdrawal symptoms when you attempt to stop taking the drug.



Treatment

Detoxification

The goal of detoxification, also called "detox" or withdrawal therapy, is to enable users to stop taking the addicting drug as quickly and safely as possible. For some people, it may be safe to undergo withdrawal therapy on an outpatient basis. Others may need admission to a hospital or a residential treatment center.

Behavior therapy

As part of a drug treatment program, behavior therapy — a form of psychotherapy — can be done by a psychologist or psychiatrist. Therapy and counseling may be done with an individual, a family or a group. The therapist or counselor can:

- Help you develop ways to cope with your drug cravings
- Suggest strategies to avoid drugs and prevent relapse
- Offer suggestions on how to deal with a relapse if it occurs
- Talk about issues regarding your job, legal problems, and relationships with family and friends
- Include family members to help them develop better communication skills and be supportive
- Address other mental health conditions

Self-help groups

Many, though not all, self-help support groups use the 12-step model first developed by Alcoholics Anonymous. Self-help support groups, such as Narcotics Anonymous, help people who are addicted to drugs.

The self-help support group message is that addiction is a chronic disorder with a danger of relapse. Self-help support groups can decrease the sense of shame and isolation that can lead to relapse.