



Substance Use

Barbituates, benzodiazepines and hypnotics

Do I have a problem - what is drug addiction?

It affects a person's brain and behavior, and leads to an inability to limit or moderate the use of a drug or medication. When you're addicted, you may continue using the substance despite the harm and consequences it causes. Addiction can start with experimental use of a substance in social situations, which may become more frequent, or if you are abusing a prescribed medication. As time passes, you may need larger doses of the drug to get high or reduce pain. Soon you may need the drug just to feel normal. As your drug use increases, it's difficult to go without the drug and attempts to stop may cause intense cravings and make you feel physically ill (withdrawal symptoms).

What are barbituates, benzodiazepines and hypnotics and how do they affect you?

They are are prescription central nervous system depressants. They're often used and misused in search for a sense of relaxation or a desire to "switch off" or forget stress-related thoughts or feelings. Examples include phenobarbital and secobarbital (Seconal); sedatives, such as diazepam (Valium), alprazolam (Xanax), lorazepam (Ativan), clonazepam (Klonopin) and chlordiazepoxide (Librium); and prescription sleeping medications such as zolpidem (Ambien, Intermezzo, others) and zaleplon (Sonata).

Signs and symptoms of use and dependence include:

- Drowsiness
- Slurred speech
- Lack of coordination
- Irritability or changes in mood
- Problems concentrating or thinking clearly
- Memory problems
- Involuntary eye movements
- Lack of inhibition
- Slowed breathing and reduced blood pressure
- Falls or accidents
- Dizziness

Complications of dependency include:

- Multiple short-term and long-term mental and physical health problems
- Psychosis, seizures, overdose, or death
- Physical changes to some nerve cells (neurons) in your brain
- Getting an infectious disease
- Engaging in dangerous behavior
- Marital and family problems
- Failing to fulfill obligations or put others at risk at work or home
- Legal issues and financial problems

Where can you turn for support?

In addition to a health care professional, you can seek support from a trusted friend, colleague or family member. Your union or HR rep can provide referrals, including financial resources. National and local resources are available to both the individual and to those offering support, and include:

- SAMHSA Substance Use Treatment Locator – <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-treatment> – 1-800-662-4357
- Entertainment Industry Therapist Finder – btshelp.org/findatherapist

You can find links to self diagnostic tools at btshelp.org/substanceuse