



Substance Use

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).

Opioids are narcotic, pain relieving drugs produced from opium or made synthetically. This class of drugs includes, among others, heroin, morphine, codeine, methadone and oxycodone. Opioid use may start out as a prescribed medication for pain, but once the prescription ends some people may seek the drug through other means.

Meth, cocaine and other stimulants include amphetamines, meth (methamphetamine), cocaine, methylphenidate (e.g. Ritalin, Concerta) and amphetamine-dextroamphetamine (e.g. Adderall, Adderall XR). They are often used and misused in search of a "high," or to boost energy, to improve performance at work, or to lose weight or control appetite.

Benzodiazepines, barbituates and hypnotics 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).

Cannabis is one of the most widely used drugs in America. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, about 9% of people who use marijuana become dependent on or addicted, and 30% of those who use marijuana experience emotional dependency. While marijuana addiction isn't associated with overdose death like other drugs, it can have serious side effects. Someone who smokes marijuana daily may be functioning at a reduced intellectual level most or all of the time.

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