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**DRUG ADDICTION.**

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. Substances such as alcohol, marijuana and nicotine also are considered drugs.

An Addiction is a disease that affects your brain and behavior. When you’re addicted to drugs, you can’t resist the urge to use them, no matter how much harm the drugs may cause.  
Drug addiction isn’t about just heroin, cocaine, or other illegal drugs. You can get addicted to alcohol, nicotine, opioid painkillers, and other legal substances.  
At first, you may choose to take a drug because you like the way it makes you feel. You may think you can control how much and how often you use it. But over time, drugs change how your brain works. These physical changes can last a long time. They make you lose self-control and can lead you to damaging behaviors.

Drug addiction can start with experimental use of a recreational drug in social situations, and, for some people, the drug use becomes more frequent. For others, particularly with opioids, drug addiction begins with exposure to prescribed medications, or receiving medications from a friend or relative who has been prescribed the medication.

The risk of addiction and how fast you become addicted varies by drug. Some drugs, such as opioid painkillers, have a higher risk and cause addiction more quickly than others. .As time passes, you may need larger doses of the drug to get high. Soon you may need the drug just to feel good. As your drug use increases, you may find that it's increasingly difficult to go without the drug. Attempts to stop drug use may cause intense cravings and make you feel physically ill (withdrawal symptoms).You may need help from your doctor, family, friends, support groups or an organized treatment program to overcome your drug addiction and stay drug-free.

**SYPTOMS OF DRUG ADDICTION**

Physical Symptoms

Some of the most noticeable symptoms of drug use are those that affect certain physiological processes. For example, your body’s tolerance to a drug develops when a drug is used long or often enough that it adapts to the consistently elevated presence of the substance. When tolerance grows, increased quantities or strengths are required to achieve the previous effects.1Individuals using a drug to get high may come to take such large doses to overcome their tolerance that they place themselves at increasing risk of potentially fatal overdose.3

Changes in appearance can be additional clues to possible drug use and may include:4

* Bloodshot or glazed eyes.
* Dilated or constricted pupils.
* Abrupt weight changes.
* Changes in hygiene.
* Dental issues.
* Skin changes.
* Problems sleeping or sleeping too much.

Signs will vary based on the substance and the method used (i.e., smoking, injection, etc.).

Behavioral Symptoms

Drug use tends to significantly alter a person's behavior and habits. Some drugs can impair the brain's ability to focus and think clearly.5Changes in behavior, such as the following, are sometimes associated with problematic substance use:4,6

* Increased aggression or irritability.
* Changes in attitude/personality.
* Lethargy.
* Depression.
* Sudden changes in a social network.
* Dramatic changes in habits and/or priorities.
* Involvement in criminal activity.Learning to recognize the physical or behavioral signs of drug use can help prevent the problem from progressing further.

## **Prevention**

The best way to prevent an addiction to a drug is not to take the drug at all. If your doctor prescribes a drug with the potential for addiction, use care when taking the drug and follow the instructions provided by your doctor.

Doctors should prescribe these medications at safe doses and amounts and monitor their use so that you're not given too great a dose or for too long a time. If you feel you need to take more than the prescribed dose of a medication, talk to your doctor.

### Preventing drug misuse in children and teenagers

Take these steps to help prevent drug misuse in your children and teenagers:

* **Communicate.** Talk to your children about the risks of drug use and misuse.
* **Listen.** Be a good listener when your children talk about peer pressure, and be supportive of their efforts to resist it.
* **Set a good example.** Don't misuse alcohol or addictive drugs. Children of parents who misuse drugs are at greater risk of drug addiction.
* **Strengthen the bond.** Work on your relationship with your children. A strong, stable bond between you and your child will reduce your child's risk of using or misusing drugs.