

Substance misuse truth

Addiction is about more than drugs

Activity:

"I hide my credit card bills from my spouse."
"I work 14 hours a day."
"Just one more plastic surgery and my body will be perfect."



Object:

"I can't walk away from my favorite gambling website."
"I never put down my phone, not even when I sleep."

It can be about a lot of things

Substance:

"Sometimes, I take an extra pain pill even when I'm not hurting."
"I often drink 5 or 6 beers when I only want to drink 1."



Behavior:

"I have to exercise constantly to stay fit."
"I want sex 24/7."
"I always crave sugar."

Addiction is when that "thing" becomes the major focus of your life, and when it gets to the point that you don't do other things or it harms you or someone else physically, mentally or socially.¹

A bigger problem than you may realize

It can happen to anyone at any age:



1 in 7 Americans age 12 and older has a substance misuse problem.²



Less than 11% of people in need get treatment.³



9 out of 10 people who misuse or are addicted to drugs and alcohol began before age 18.³

What to look for

So how do you know? Pay attention when you or someone you care about:^{1,2,4,5}

- Becomes obsessed with an activity, substance, object or behavior.
- Seeks it out even when it causes physical problems, work or study issues, or conflict with friends and family.
- Does it over and over again or can't stop.
- Has withdrawal symptoms: jumpiness, trembling, sweating, nausea/vomiting, insomnia, depression, irritability, fatigue, loss of appetite or headaches.
- Doesn't feel in control of when, how long, or how much with the activity, substance, object or behavior.
- Hides it /denies a problem with it.
- Experiences a blackout doing it.
- Is depressed or has extreme mood swings.
- Neglects activities that were once really important.
- Has an extreme change in appearance, eating habits or energy.
- Takes serious or unnecessary health risks.
- Has a family history of addiction.
- Comes from a family that was mentally or physically abusive; has low self-esteem.

Addiction changes how your brain works

These brain changes can lead to harmful and self-destructive behaviors. And just like diabetes, heart disease or other chronic conditions, it needs continuing long-term care.⁶



Consider home life

Research suggests a higher risk for addiction and addictive behaviors if:⁴

- One or more of your parents had a drug, alcohol or other substance problem.
- You come from a family with a history of conflict, aggression, or other ongoing stressors.
- You have a parent with depression or mental health issues.

Help any time you need it

If you or someone you know could be misusing substances or has symptoms of addictive behavior, get help from a doctor or contact:

National Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

You can also contact your company's Employee Assistance Program or Human Resources department about helpful resources available to you.

1. Ruth C. Engs, RN, EdD. Professor, Applied Health Science. What are Addictive Behaviors? Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405, 1987, 2012.

2. Center on Addiction: What is Addiction; Prevalence of Addiction; What is the Difference Between Drug or Alcohol Use and Addiction? (rev. April 14, 2017). centeronaddiction.org.

3. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Findings from NSDUH reveal that only a subset of individuals receive services for substance use and mental health issues (September 21, 2017): samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/201709211000.

4. Recovery.org: Family History and Addiction Risk: What You Need to Know to Beat the Odds; Addiction Signs, Symptoms, Effects and Treatment (accessed April 19, 2018): recovery.org.

5. National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence: About Addiction: Signs and Symptoms (rev. December 19, 2016): nccadd.org.

6. National Institute on Drug Abuse: The Science of Drug Abuse and Addiction: The Basics (rev. October 2016): drugabuse.gov/publications/media-guide/science-drug-abuse-addiction-basics.

This information is meant to educate, not serve as medical advice. See your doctor for medical advice about your health.

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