

## Substance Use Disorders

Addiction hurts people and hurts relationships. It is a powerful behavior.

Drug and alcohol problems affect:

- Family
- Friends
- Career

In 2011, 20.6 million people over age 12 lived with a substance use disorder.<sup>1</sup>

### Signs of addiction

- **Defensiveness.** People refuse to discuss their actions. They may be:
  - Aggressive
  - Angry
  - Frustrated
- **Blame.** People make excuses for their actions. Or blame someone else.
- **Lies.** People may tell constant lies. They hide the truth. They think no one knows their secrets. But friends and family know the truth.
- **Isolation.** People avoid their family and friends. They do not:
  - Answer questions
  - Interact with others

### Treatment

Many options exist. The first step is to admit having a problem. Here are ways people can get help:

- **Treatment programs.** Many programs help people with substance use disorders. There may be group sessions. The programs can be in outpatient or residential places.
- **Psychotherapy.** People meet with a specialist. This is called counseling or therapy.

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<sup>1</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Results from the 2011 National Survey on Drug use and Health; Summary of National Findings, NSDUH Series H-44, HHS Publication No. (SMA) 12-4713. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2012, p6.

- **Self-help groups.** People meet with peers who have the same problems. This helps them focus on recovery.
- **Withdrawal help.** People may stop using a drug or alcohol. But they feel pain. Some doctors can treat the pain.

### Facts about dependency

People who depend on alcohol or drugs cannot control their use of the substances. They may not be able to quit or limit what they use.

### Myths

Some common images of alcohol or drug-dependent people are:

- They cannot live without a drink or drugs.
- They use the substance every day.
- They seem weak-willed.

But a person can depend on substances and not show signs. Even though the person may have a serious problem.

Experts believe:

- Genetics may affect some people.
- Dependency is an illness. It cannot be cured by willpower alone.

### Signs of dependency

People with a problem may:

- Not be able to cut back or quit
- Have "blackouts" or memory loss
- Use the substance while alone
- Hide the evidence
- Ignore their problems
- Do things they regret
- Need the substance to enjoy an event
- Use more than others in a social gathering
- Neglect responsibilities
- Do almost anything to get the substance
- Have money or legal problems related to substance use

Family, friends or employers show concern.

### Problems caused by dependency

People act unwisely while using drugs and or alcohol. They may:

- Embarrass themselves
- Endanger their health
- Endanger their life
- Endanger others by:
  - Having unsafe sex
  - Driving under the influence
- Lose a job
- Lose family

## What you can do

You can help yourself or others.

- Admit you have a problem. Or encourage a person to do so.
- Limit time around people who use drugs or alcohol.
- Find support groups. They help with recovery.
- Get help from doctors or therapists. Many work with dependency problems.
- Find a recovery program at a hospital or a clinic.
- Get support from other people in recovery. For example, join a 12-step program like Alcoholics Anonymous.

Recovery is not easy. There is no quick way. It requires:

- Support from family and friends
- Hard work and dedication

The first step is difficult. Then you can begin your journey of healing.

*This document is for your information only. It is not meant to give medical advice. It should not be used to replace a visit with a provider. Magellan Health Services does not endorse other resources that may be mentioned here.*