

Addictions

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Definition of Addiction

- An addiction is a chronic dysfunction of the brain system that involves reward, motivation, and memory. It's about the way your body craves a substance or behavior, especially if it causes a compulsive or obsessive pursuit of "reward" and lack of concern over consequences.
- It is the fact or condition of being addicted to a particular substance or activity.

Addiction vs. Dependence

- **Dependence** usually means physical dependence on a substance. It is characterized by the symptoms of tolerance and withdrawal. While it is possible to have a physical dependence without being addicted, addiction is usually right around the corner.
- **Addiction** is marked by a change in behavior caused by the biochemical changes in the brain after continued substance abuse. Substance use becomes the main priority of the addict, regardless of the harm they may cause to themselves or others. An addiction causes people to act irrationally when they don't have the substance they are addicted to in their system.

Addiction

- Addictive substances and behaviors can create a pleasurable “high” that’s physical and psychological.
- You’ll typically use more of certain substances or engage in behaviors longer to achieve the same high again.
- Over time, the addiction becomes difficult to stop and can seriously interfere with your daily life.

Addiction

- People experiencing addiction are also prone to **cycles of relapse and remission**. This means they may cycle between intense and mild use.
- Despite these cycles, addictions will typically **worsen over time**. They can lead to permanent health complications and serious consequences like bankruptcy. That's why it's important for anyone who is experiencing addiction to seek help.
- **Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** - provides more information, including guidance on prevention and mental and substance use disorders.
- According to U.K. charity **Action on Addiction**, 1 in 3 people in the world have an addiction of some kind. Addiction can come in the form of any substance or behavior.

Addiction Symptoms

Someone experiencing an addiction will:

- be unable stay away from the substance or stop the addictive behavior
- display a lack of self-control
- have an increased desire for the substance or behavior
- dismiss how their behavior may be causing problems
- lack an emotional response

Addiction Types

- The most well-known and serious addiction is to **drugs** and **alcohol**. Nearly 1 in 10 Americans have an addiction to both. Of the people with a drug addiction, more than two-thirds also abuse alcohol.
- The most common drug addictions are:
 - **nicotine**, found in tobacco
 - THC, found in marijuana
 - opioid (narcotics), or pain relievers
 - cocaine

Addiction Types

Other common addictions include:

- coffee or caffeine
- gambling
- anger, as a coping strategy
- food
- technology
- sex
- Work

Technology, sex, and work addictions are not recognized as addictions by the American Psychiatric Association in their most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

Signs of Addiction

Most signs of addiction relate to a person's impaired (damaged) ability to maintain self-control. This includes changes that are:

- **social**, such as seeking out situations that encourage a substance or behavior
- **behavioral**, such increased secrecy
- **health related**, such as insomnia or memory loss
- related to **personality**

Signs of Addiction

Some **behavior and emotional changes** associated with addiction include:

- unrealistic or poor assessment of the pros and cons associated with using substances or behaviors
- blaming other factors or people for their problems
- increased levels of anxiety, depression, and sadness
- increased sensitivity and more severe reactions to stress
- trouble identifying feelings
- trouble telling the difference between feelings and the physical sensations of one's emotions

Signs of Addiction

- Someone with an addiction **won't stop their behavior**, even if they recognize the problems the addiction is causing. In some cases, they'll also display a **lack of control**, like using more than intended.
- Some habits or social behaviors look like addiction. But in the case of an addiction, a person will typically react negatively when they don't get their "reward." For example, someone addicted to coffee can experience physical and psychological withdrawal symptoms such as severe headaches and irritability.

Causes of Addiction

- Some people may try a substance or behavior and never approach it again, while others become addicted. This is partially due to the **brain's frontal lobes**. The frontal lobe allows a person to delay feelings of reward or gratification. In addiction, the frontal lobe malfunctions and gratification is immediate.
- Other possible causes of addiction include **chemical imbalances** in the brain and mental disorders such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. These disorders can lead to coping strategies that become addictions.

Causes of Addiction

- Experts believe that **repeated and early exposure** to addictive substances and behaviors play a significant role.
- **Genetics** also increase the likelihood of an addiction by about 50 percent, according to the [American Society of Addiction Medicine](#).
- But just because addiction runs in the family does not necessarily mean a person will develop one. **Environment** and culture also play a role in how a person responds to a substance or behavior.
- **Traumatic experiences** that affect coping abilities can also lead to addictive behaviors.

Addiction Stages

Addiction will often play out in stages. Your brain and body's reactions at early stages of addiction are different from reactions during the later stages.

The four stages of addiction are:

- experimentation: uses or engages out of curiosity
- social or regular: uses or engages in social situations or for social reasons
- problem or risk: uses or engages in an extreme way with disregard for consequences
- dependency: uses or engages in a behavior on a daily basis, or several times per day, despite possible negative consequences

Complications of Addiction

Addiction that's left untreated can lead to long-term consequences. These **consequences** can be:

- physical, such as heart disease, HIV/AIDS, and neurological damage
- psychological and emotional, such as anxiety, stress, and depression
- social, such as jail and damaged relationships
- economic, such as bankruptcy and debt

Different substances and behaviors have different effects on a person's health. Serious complications can cause health concerns or social situations to result in the end of a life.

Treatment of Addiction

All types of addiction are treatable. Treatments will focus on helping you or the person you know stop seeking and engaging in their addiction.

Common therapies include:

- medications, for mental disorders such as depression or schizophrenia
- psychotherapy, including behavioral, talk, and group therapies
- medical services, to help treat serious complications of addiction, like withdrawal during detox
- addiction case manager, to help coordinate and check ongoing treatment
- inpatient addiction treatment
- self-help and support groups

Treatment of Addiction

You can also visit your primary care doctor for an evaluation. The type of treatment a doctor recommends depends on the severity and stage of the addiction.

- With early stages of addiction, a doctor may recommend medication and therapy.
- Later stages may benefit from inpatient addiction treatment in a controlled setting.

Support in Fighting Addiction

- Overcoming addiction is a long journey. Support can go a long way in making the recovery process more successful. Many organizations can help, depending on the type of addiction.
- These include:
 - [Al-Anon](#)
 - [Alcoholics Anonymous \(AA\)](#)
 - [Cocaine Anonymous \(CA\)](#)
 - [Crystal Meth Anonymous \(CMA\)](#)
 - [Gamblers Anonymous \(GA\)](#)
 - [Marijuana Anonymous \(MA\)](#)
 - [Narcotics Anonymous \(NA\)](#)
 - [Sex Addicts Anonymous \(SAA\)](#)
 - [Faces and Voices of Recovery](#)
 - [National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse](#)
 - [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#)
 - [Smart Recovery](#)
 - [Women for Sobriety](#)
 - [Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America](#)

Support in Fighting Addiction

These organizations can help connect you with support groups, such as:

- local community groups
- online forums
- addiction information and experts
- treatment plans

A strong social support system is important during recovery. Letting your friends, family, and those closest to you know about your treatment plan can help you keep on track and avoid triggers.

VIDEO

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymNaZH
Eqirs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymNaZH
Eqirs)