

# Help with Drug Abuse Fact Sheet

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**Pharmacist Support**

working for pharmacists & their families

## What is drug abuse?

Drug abuse is defined as either the use of a drug in excessive quantities or as using a drug for purposes for which it was not intended. A drug addict is dependent on a drug, either physically or psychologically. Drug addiction is a disease of the brain and addicts suffer from an uncontrollable craving with no regard for any consequences.

There is a wide range of drugs that are abused – illegal drugs (for example cocaine, heroin and cannabis), legal drugs (such as alcohol) and prescription medicines.

A drug addict will continue to use drugs despite adverse consequences.

## Signs and symptoms of addiction?

The first step in recovery is to recognise your addiction. These questions can be used to help you recognise if you have a problem:-

- Do you ever use drugs?
- Have you ever substituted one drug for another, thinking that one particular drug was the problem?
- Have you ever manipulated or lied to a doctor to obtain prescription drugs?
- Have you ever stolen drugs?
- Do you regularly use a drug when you wake up or when you go to bed?
- Have you ever taken one drug to overcome the effects of another?
- Do you avoid people or places that do not approve of you using drugs?
- Have you ever used a drug without knowing what it was or what it would do to you?
- Has your performance at work ever suffered from the effects of your drug use?
- Have you ever been arrested as a result of using drugs?
- Have you ever lied about what or how much you use?
- Do you put the purchase of drugs ahead of your financial responsibilities?
- Have you ever tried to stop or control your using?
- Have you ever been in a prison, hospital, or drug rehabilitation centre because of your using?
- Does using interfere with your sleeping or eating?
- Does the thought of running out of drugs terrify you?
- Do you feel it is impossible for you to live without drugs?
- Do you ever question your own sanity?

- Is your drug use making life at home unhappy?
- Have you ever thought you couldn't fit in or have a good time without drugs?
- Have you ever felt defensive, guilty, or ashamed about your using?
- Do you think a lot about drugs?
- Have you had irrational or indefinable fears?
- Has using affected your sexual relationships?
- Have you ever taken drugs you didn't prefer?
- Have you ever used drugs because of emotional pain or stress?
- Have you ever overdosed on any drugs?
- Do you continue to use despite negative consequences?
- Do you think you might have a drug problem?

These questions are designed to make you see how using drugs has changed your life in a negative way. There is no specific number of 'yes' answers that will define you as an addict – it is up to you and how you feel your life is being affected.

## Risks of drug abuse

Depending on the drugs used, problems can include:-

- Anxiety and depression
- Disrupted sleeping
- Changes in personality
- Apathy
- Mood swings
- Changes in appearance
- Loss of appetite
- Psychosis
- Slurred speech
- Craving for more drugs
- Withdrawal symptoms
- Decreased co-ordination
- Irregular heartbeat
- Loss of employment
- Falling into debt
- Difficulties in relationships with family members, friends, colleagues
- Legal difficulties
- Professional difficulties

## Treatment

Once you have recognised that you have a problem you should consult your GP or local drug dependence unit for treatment advice. You may be given medication to help your withdrawal and this should be coupled with support and advice to help you adjust to life after you have stopped using.

There are also a number of agencies that can help you, listed below.

## What to do if you have a problem

Contact the Pharmacist Health Support Programme  
Confidential helpline 0808 168 5132  
Pharmacist Support 0808 1682 233  
Email [info@pharmacistsupport.org](mailto:info@pharmacistsupport.org)

## Further information

Narcotics Anonymous  
Tel: 0845 373 3366  
Web: [www.ukna.org](http://www.ukna.org)

Families Anonymous  
Tel: 0845 1200 660  
Web: [www.famanon.org.uk](http://www.famanon.org.uk)