



Self Help

Problems with alcohol and drug use

People take different types of drugs and drink alcohol for many different reasons - to relax, to help them focus, to fit in, because they're bored or curious, to escape their problems or to help them cope with overwhelming emotions. There are dangers to drinking alcohol in excess and taking illegal drugs such as marijuana, ecstasy, cocaine, LSD and amphetamines. Alcohol and drug use can negatively impact your physical and mental health, and you can also become addicted.

Some of the signs of alcohol or drug addiction

- Relationships with friends or family are affected by your drinking or drug use
- Feeling uncomfortable and alone without alcohol or drugs
- Lying or not being honest with friends and family about how much you're using
- Being unable to manage negative emotions or stress without alcohol or drugs
- Spending money you can't afford on alcohol or drugs
- Having blackouts
- Sweating, nausea or insomnia when you don't drink or use
- Needing to drink or use more and more to get drunk or high
- Drinking alcohol or using when you wake up in the morning

Negative effects of drug addiction

There are a number of negative effects that come with alcohol and drug addiction. Different drugs have different long-term effects, however some common symptoms include:

- Feeling jittery
- Feeling spaced out, hearing voices, or seeing things
- Feeling paranoid
- Memory and attention problems
- Severe depression
- Heart problems
- Sexual problems (including impotence)
- Brain damage
- Diabetes
- Conflict in relationships with family and friends

Some ways of dealing with cravings

1. **Seek support** – Find someone who you are close with to help support your goal, such as a friend, family member, doctor, or psychologist. Seek them out and talk to them when you feel like drinking or using.
2. **Make a commitment to yourself** – You need to make your own decisions about drug and alcohol use. Think carefully about what it is you want for yourself, and let that be the most important factor in your decisions.
3. **Delay** – Cravings tend to peak after 45 minutes. Remember this, and try to ride out the urge to use.
4. **Distract** – The more you think about your craving the more you feed it and the bigger it becomes. It is helpful to distract yourself by doing something else - visit a supportive friend, read, watch TV, go for a walk, listen to music.
5. **Strategies for coping** – Overwhelming emotions often trigger cravings so talking about your feelings with someone you trust can reduce your need for drugs or alcohol. Try experimenting with other ways of coping with overwhelming emotions to find what works for you – perhaps try relaxation, seeking support, being mindful, exercising or self-soothing.

Getting Help

There are places where you can get help with dealing with alcohol and drug-related issues. If you think you could use some help, you should visit your GP or another health professional.