



RESOURCES

American Psychiatric Association, 1-888-35-PSYCH or 1-888-35-77924, www.psych.org
apa@psych.org

Mental Health America, 1-703-684-7722
www.nmha.org

American Mental Health Counselors Association, 1-800-326-2642 or 1-703-548-6002, www.amhca.org

American Psychological Association, 1-800-374-2721 or 1-202-336-5500, www.apa.org

Drugabusecenters.com

>INFOCUS

ADDICTION

breaking the cycle

Addiction Affects Us All

Millions of people in this country suffer from one form of addiction or another, and their addictions affect the lives of millions more friends, coworkers and family members.

The devastation caused by addiction cuts across all ethnic, education and economic boundaries. Those who suffer from addiction do have some things in common: strained relationships, lost opportunities, medical problems, and poor prospects for the future.

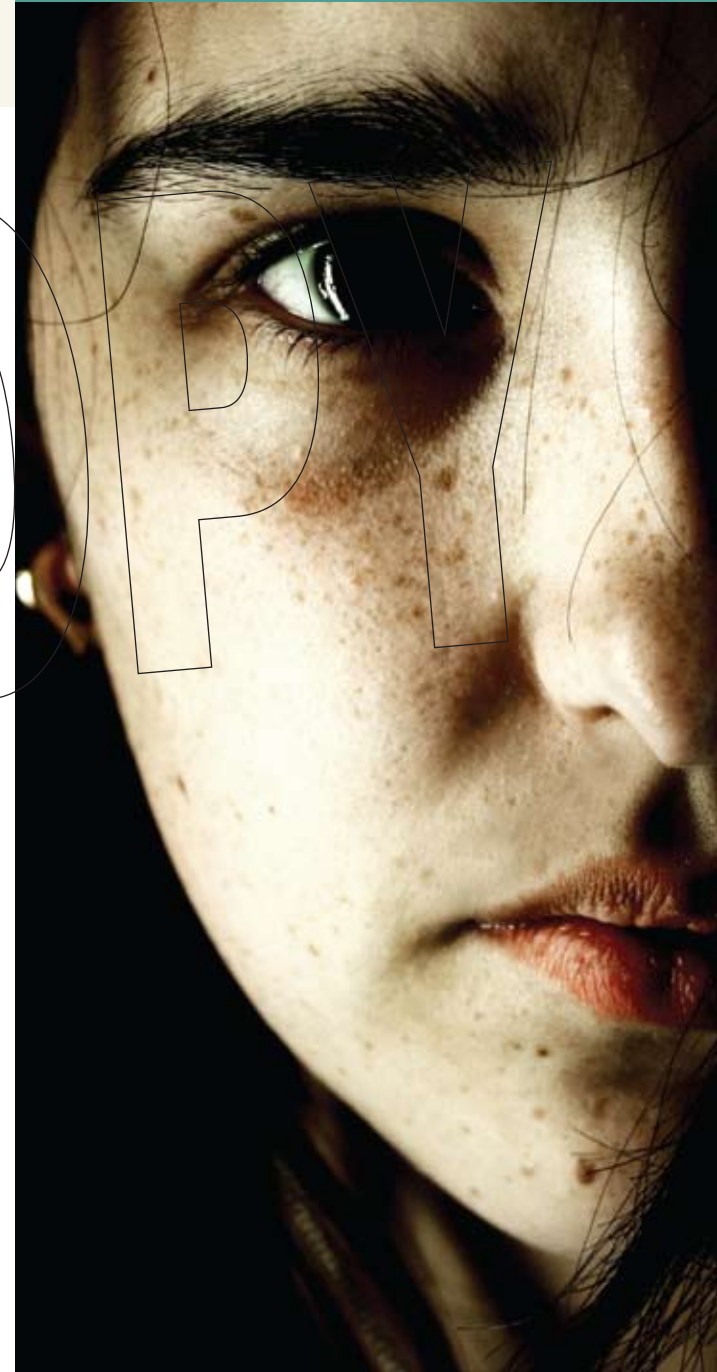
A recent study by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reveals:

- One of every eight Americans has a significant problem with alcohol or other drugs. Forty percent of this group has the "dual diagnosis" of a concurrent mental/nervous disorder.
- Over 27 million Americans either use illicit drugs regularly or are "heavy drinkers." Of these, almost 16 million are estimated to need immediate treatment.
- By age 18, almost 12 percent of all young people are illicit drug users.
- Approximately 70 percent of illegal drug users are employed and contribute significantly to workplace absenteeism, accidents, decreased productivity, increased insurance expenses, employee turnover costs and on-the-job violence.
- The estimated annual direct cost to our society resulting from addiction is more than \$250 billion.

It is generally accepted that chemical dependency, along with associated mental health disorders has become one of the most severe health and social problems facing this country.

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What is Addiction?

Addiction is a treatable brain disorder. People who are addicted to alcohol or other drugs cannot control their desire to consume more of the drug, even though using is causing them serve health, social and/or legal problems. To be addicted is to have no control over your own behavior.

Through repeated exposure to alcohol and other drugs, chemical changes occur in the brain. These “changes” in turn affect behavior, often leading to more abuse. Take away the drug and the addicted brain experiences feelings of discomfort, just like “hunger pains.” The only way to make the pain go away is to take more of the drug. This is a powerful cycle that is difficult, but not impossible, to break.

Over time, untreated addictions grow stronger. The addict needs more of the drug, more often. They begin using at work or school. The longer the addiction is allowed to survive, the harder it is to treat, and the more costly to one’s health and relationships.



Symptoms of Addiction

There are three primary symptoms of addiction: Tolerance, Withdrawal and Denial.

Over time, the addict will need more and more of the drug to achieve the same result. The endless “chase” to satisfy the cravings of the addicted brain is called **tolerance**, and it’s a sure sign of addiction.

Withdrawal occurs when the addict is deprived of the drug. Symptoms can vary depending on the drug, but usually include painful physical reactions and wild swings of emotion.

Most people who suffer from the illness of addiction won’t admit they have a problem. Their **denial** is often expressed: “But I enjoy drinking...” or “I can quit whenever I want....” Sound familiar?

Withdrawal can cause painful physical reactions and wild swings of emotion.



Recovering from any addiction is a lifelong process, a day-to-day battle that will take courage.

Don’t Give Up, There’s Help!

The first step toward recovery is for the addict to admit that he or she has a problem and needs help. They should enlist the support of those closest to them. Understand that recovery from any addiction is not a “one shot deal.” There are no magic bullets or pills to make it all go away. Recovery is a lifelong process, a day-to-day battle that will take courage. To beat addiction and return to a normal, productive life, the addict will need the support of friends, co-workers and family, professional counseling, and possibly medical care.

Curing addiction is a multi-billion dollar business that provides assistance ranging from weekly counseling sessions to intensive long-term residential therapy. The depth and severity of the addiction can often be determined in one or more preliminary consultations with a therapist.

Treatments will vary depending on the type of addiction. Factors include the type of drug abused, the length and amount of use, and the medical and psychological state of the addict.

There are many community resources that may be able to offer assistance in overcoming addiction. Many companies offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The professionals running these programs are non-judgmental and everything is confidential. Usually this assistance is free of charge. If not, insurance often covers all or most of the cost.

If there is no access to an Employee Assistance Program, seek help from a medical professional, religious or non-profit organization. Check your local telephone directory for listings in your community that may offer the specific help you need. Many times, treatment services are free or offered on a sliding scale (pay what you can) fee program.

It’s Never Too Late...

Chronic addiction is a treatable illness. With determination, the support of loved ones and the proper counseling and treatment services, anyone suffering from this illness can break the cycle of addiction and resume a normal, healthy life.

