

What are My Treatment Options?

Because things like alcohol or drugs directly affect your brain, there's no such thing as "just getting over it" or "willing the addiction away."

The most common first step for treatment is detox, which is where all of the drugs are removed from your system. This is important because your mental ability for treatment is impaired when drugs are involved. You may experience a variety of physical and emotional withdrawal symptoms like depression, anxiety, restless, nausea, chills, or sleeplessness. Just know that treatment centers are experienced in helping you get through this process and keeping you safe. Depending on what you're addicted to, you may even get some medications to help you feel better through drug withdrawal, making it easier to stop using.

The next step in treatment is to start therapy. Most medical professionals agree that in order to be effective, pharmacological treatments have to be integrated with other forms of addiction rehabilitation, like behavioral therapy, individual or group psychotherapy, behavior-modification strategies, twelve-step programs, or residential treatment facilities. In other words, you can't just take a prescription pill and expect the addiction to just disappear. You also, unfortunately, can't just go to therapy and expect a cure, particularly because of how your brain may have been affected with the substance abuse.

Ultimately, addiction is a chronic disease, much like diabetes, asthma or heart disease, and treatment may never really offer a "cure." People who are recovering from an addiction may be at risk for relapse for their entire lives, but research shows that combining addiction medications with therapy ensure the best chances for success. Talk to your doctor so that they may make a tailored approach to treat your specific drug or alcohol abuse.

If you or your doctor thinks you could benefit from substance abuse treatment, there are plenty of options for you. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has a helpline to get some advice on how to proceed: 1-800-622-HELP (4357).



What to Do if Someone You Love Has an Addiction.

If someone comes to you for help, they have taken a monumental step in recovery. If they are resistant to help, you can at least try to offer support by trying to convince them to talk to their doctor. There are over 3,500 physicians in the United States who specialize in addiction, so get some information about them and leave it with your friend or loved one.

Emphasize to them that it takes a lot of courage for them to reach out for help. Let them know that their addiction can be beaten. People recover every day from addiction, so let them know they are not alone.



Printed on 30% Post-Consumer Recycled Paper



© 2018 PRIMO PREVENTION, LLC • PO Box 371 • Reserve, LA 70084
985-359-7848 • www.primoprevention.com • PAM-BTC-05

DRUG ABUSE



Difficult but Not Impossible

It Feels Right, But it's So Wrong

What is Addiction?

Addiction is characterized by compulsive involvement with a particular rewarding stimulus, despite any adverse consequences. Basically, no matter how many relationships are ruined or how sick it makes you feel, you just can't give it up. Approximately 22 million people in the United States are addicted to some sort of drug; the most common drugs that people are addicted to are nicotine, tranquilizers, painkillers, and marijuana.

The most addictive drugs are heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, and opioids. Typically, a person just has to inject heroin once and they're hooked. Other drugs are not as instantaneously addictive; rather, you build up a tolerance to them over time but have withdrawal symptoms when you try to quit.

How Does It Happen?

Addiction occurs in the brain's reward center, also known as the nucleus accumbens. When a person does a pleasurable activity like spending time with friends or exercising, their brain releases dopamine—which makes them feel happy.

Drugs take it a step further by flooding the brain's reward center with dopamine, which is how people who may have become sick when they tried drugs for the first time can still become addicted. The influx of dopamine motivates that person to repeat the action, and the overstimulation of the nucleus accumbens causes an intense, gratifying high that can lead someone to compulsively take a drug. Soon, the brain adjusts to the extra levels of dopamine by making less of it on its own or by reducing the cell's ability to respond to it. This is how tolerance begins, and why the same amount of a drug that got a person high initially may not have the same effect over time. Eventually, they may try more of the drug or a different, higher potency drug to get that same effect.



Drugs are Liars

They make you feel happy, whole and complete. You feel as if nothing can hold you back and that you're practically invincible—at least until they start to wear off.

Being happy—truly happy with your life—may seem impossible at first. Maybe that's the reason you feel that drugs and alcohol are the only things that makes life seem better. Studies show, however, that people who are happier tend to stay sober longer. Here are some things that will make you happier, thus strengthening your chances for remaining sober:

- **Meaningful Relationships and Commitment.** Having hundreds of friends doesn't matter as much as having close, personal, deep relationships with other people.
- **Giving and Serving Others.** Make time to give back and to do things for others with nothing expected in return. Volunteering is a great way to connect to other people and your community.
- **Staying Healthy.** Regular exercise, eating healthier food and sleeping better all contribute to a healthier lifestyle, which is great for your sobriety.
- **Reaching for a Goal or Trying a New Hobby.** Find something that you can work at and try to master. Whether it is a creative outlet like pottery or learning to play an instrument, or it's a physical activity like riding a horse, it should be something that challenges you but doesn't overwhelm you. Once you get into the groove of it, you can experience being in the moment.
- **Spirituality, Religion or a Higher Power.** There have been some studies that show people who are a part of an organized religion or show commitment to a higher power consider themselves to be happier than people who don't have any sort of spiritual connection. Furthermore, many different traditions of faith—Buddhists, Christians, Muslims and more—all demonstrate some sort of meditation, which is linked with feelings of well-being and happiness.
- **Be Optimistic and Grateful.** Feelings like sadness, anger, regret and disappointment are all normal human emotions. However, people who are generally happier manage to find opportunities in difficult or negative situations. Optimistic thinking can help you feel better mentally, emotionally and physically.

Who's at Risk for Drug Addiction?

Anyone can become addicted to something, but there are a lot of different factors to consider what may cause an individual to develop an addiction:

- **Age.** Adolescents' brains are not as developed as an adult's, thereby making them more vulnerable to addiction. Not only are teenagers more likely to begin using drugs than adults, they're less resistant to treatment and more likely to relapse.
- **Genetics.** Research shows that genetic factors, along with social and other psychological factors, are associated with addiction. Roughly half of a person's risk is attributed to their genetic makeup.
- **Psychological.** People with mental health disorders like depression, anxiety, ADHD, or PTSD are more likely to develop substance abuse disorders because they attempt to use drugs to deal with their problems.
- **Environmental.** People with adverse childhood experiences—like abuse or household dysfunction—are more likely to not only suffer with substance abuse but also other problems throughout their lifespan.

Know Your Triggers

Relapse can be common for recovering drug addicts due to how the brain has been permanently altered. Don't let this intimidate you, though. If you can understand what leads to a relapse, you can take the necessary steps to avoid the thing that makes you want to use drugs. Different people will be triggered by different things, but there are some common emotions that can lead to a relapse. Fear, frustration, depression, stress or anxiety can lead to a relapse, but being aware of these emotions and learning different ways to cope with them can keep you from using drugs to try and escape your problems.

Other people may also be really terrible influences when it comes to your sobriety. Suddenly, you've "abandoned them" or "you've changed." It may be necessary to remove them from your life if it puts your sobriety at stake. Avoid going to places like bars, clubs or parties, especially if drugs are present.

Whatever you do, please know that relapse doesn't mean failure; it's an opportunity for growth. You may feel like you failed, but you need to forgive yourself. Relapse may be a part of your recovering journey, but it's not a reason to give up on your sobriety.

