

Glossary

Addiction is a complex condition, a brain disease that is manifested by compulsive substance use despite harmful consequences. People with addiction have an intense focus on using a certain substance(s), such as alcohol or drugs, to the point that it takes over their life. They keep using alcohol or a drug even when they know it will cause problems.

Dependence develops when the neurons in the body adapt to the repeated exposure of the substance and only function normally in the presence of the substance. When the substance is withdrawn, several physiologic reactions occur. These can be mild (e.g., for caffeine) or even life threatening (e.g., for alcohol). This is known as the withdrawal syndrome.

Drug misuse is improper or unhealthy use of a drug. These include the repeated use of drugs to produce pleasure, alleviate stress, and/or alter or avoid reality. It also includes using prescription drugs in ways other than prescribed or using someone else's prescription.

Opioid Use Disorder, sometimes referred to as "opioid abuse or dependence" or "opioid addiction," is a problematic pattern of opioid use that causes significant impairment or distress.

Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription, such as oxycodone (OxyContin®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), codeine, morphine, and many others.

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid analgesic that is similar to morphine but is 50 to 100 times more potent.

Heroin is an opioid drug made from morphine, a natural substance taken from the seed pod of the various opium poppy plants grown in Southeast and Southwest Asia, Mexico, and Colombia. Heroin can be a white or brown powder, or a black sticky substance known as black tar heroin.



If you or someone you know has a substance use disorder, also known as addiction, we can help.

Call anytime, toll-free.



Glossary

Naloxone is a short-acting medication that reverses the life-threatening effects of an opioid overdose.

Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is the use of medications with counseling and behavioral therapies to treat substance use disorders and prevent opioid overdose.

Recovery is a process of change through which people improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential. There are four major dimensions that support recovery:

- Health—overcoming or managing one’s disease(s) or symptoms and making informed, healthy choices that support physical and emotional well-being.
- Home—having a stable and safe place to live.
- Purpose—conducting meaningful daily activities and having the independence, income, and resources to participate in society.
- Community—having relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope

SOURCES

American Psychiatric Association: <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/addiction/what-is-addiction>

National Institute on Drug Abuse: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/teaching-packets/neurobiology-drug-addiction/section-iii-action-heroin-morphine/8-definition-dependence>

National Institute on Drug Abuse: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/media-guide/science-drug-use-addiction-basics>

National Institute on Drug Abuse: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/fentanyl>

National Institute on Drug Abuse: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/opioids>

National Institute on Drug Abuse: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/heroin>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/recovery>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: <https://www.samhsa.gov/medication-assisted-treatment/treatment>

Updated June 2019



If you or someone you know has a substance use disorder, also known as addiction, we can help.

Call anytime, toll-free.

