

# Learning About Substance Use Disorder

## What is substance use disorder?

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Substance use disorder means that a person uses substances even though it causes harm to themselves or others. This disorder can range from mild to severe. It can develop from the use of almost any type of substance. This includes:

- Alcohol.
- Marijuana and other drugs.
- Prescription medicines.
- Over-the-counter medicines.

## Could you have substance use disorder?

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If there's a chance you may have substance use disorder, it's important to find out. Ask yourself the following questions. You may have substance use disorder if your answer is "yes" to two or more questions, and these symptoms cause you harm or distress.

- Do you use larger amounts of the substance than you ever meant to? Or have you been using it for a longer time than you ever meant to?
- Are you not able to cut down or control your use? Or do you constantly wish you could cut down?
- Do you spend a lot of time getting or using the substance or recovering from the effects?
- Do you have strong cravings for the substance?
- Do you find that you can no longer do your main jobs at work, at school, or at home?
- Do you keep using, even though your substance use hurts your relationships?
- Have you stopped doing important activities because of your substance use?
- Do you use substances in situations where doing so is dangerous?
- Do you keep using the substance even though you know it's causing health problems?
- Do you need more and more of the substance to get the same effect, or do you get less effect from the same amount over time? This is called tolerance.
- Do you have uncomfortable symptoms when you stop using the substance or use less (withdrawal)?

Substance use disorder can range from mild to severe. The more signs of this disorder you have, the more severe it may be.

Do you think you might have substance use disorder? If you do, being aware of it is an important first step.

Many people have overcome this disorder. And most of them started by reaching out to others, like caring friends or family, their doctor, or a support group.

## How is substance use disorder treated?

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You and your doctor can decide what type of treatment might help you. If you are physically dependent on the substance, you may need to stay in a hospital at first. There you can be treated for withdrawal symptoms. Medicines are often used to help control cravings, ease withdrawal symptoms, and prevent relapse.

One of the goals of treatment is to help you reduce problems associated with substance use. This may include getting used to life without the substance. Counseling can help you prepare for people or situations that might tempt you to start using again. You can practice these skills through one-on-one counseling, family therapy, or group therapy.

Therapy may be part of inpatient treatment, where you stay in a treatment center. Or it may be part of outpatient treatment. This lets you fit therapy around your job or other duties. You might talk to your doctor or do an online search for local treatment programs.

Another goal of treatment is to help you find ongoing support for your sober life. Many people find support by going to group meetings. Examples include Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, or SMART Recovery. This type of support can help you feel less alone and more motivated to stay sober. Or you might tell a friend or loved one that you need help.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## Where can you learn more?

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Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **M849** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Substance Use Disorder**".

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