



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

- Drug dependence is a compulsive and destructive use of mood-altering and perception-altering substances despite adverse medical, psychological and social consequences. These substances can affect the central nervous system, liver, kidneys and blood. Some abused drugs are legal substances such as benzodiazepines, barbiturates, amphetamines and pain-killers. Illegal substances include marijuana, cocaine, crack, heroin, LSD, PCP (angel dust), and volatile substances, such as glue, solvents and paints.
- In pregnancy, the continued use of these substances can cause mild to major problems for the mother and for the unborn child.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Depend on the substance of abuse. Most produce:

- A temporary, pleasant mood.
- Relief from anxiety.
- False feelings of self-confidence.
- Increased sensitivity to sights and sounds (including hallucinations).
- Altered activity levels (such as stupor and sleeplike states or hyperactivity).
- Unpleasant or painful symptoms when the abused substance is withdrawn.

### CAUSES

Substances of abuse may produce addiction (a physiological need) or dependence (a psychological need). Some people seem to be more susceptible to dependency than others.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- The type, frequency and the method of use of certain drugs (e.g., cocaine).
- Illness requiring prescription pain relievers or tranquilizers.
- Family history of drug abuse.
- Genetic factors (possibly). Some persons may be more susceptible to addiction.
- Exposure to violence and abuse.
- Excess alcohol consumption.
- Fatigue or overwork.
- Poverty.
- Psychological problems, including depression, dependency or poor self-esteem.
- Peer pressure.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Don't socialize with persons who use and abuse drugs.
- Seek counseling for mental health problems, such as depression or chronic anxiety, before they lead to drug problems.
- Develop wholesome interests and leisure activities.
- After surgery, illness or injury, discontinue the use of prescription pain relievers and tranquilizers as soon as possible. Don't use more than you need.

### EXPECTED OUTCOME

Strong motivation, good medical care and support from family and friends offer the best chance for improved maternal and infant outcome.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Maternal: Sexually transmitted diseases, which are more frequent among addicts; severe infections, such as endocarditis (infection of the heart), hepatitis, HIV, or blood poisoning, from intravenous injections with nonsterile needles; malnutrition; accidental injury to oneself or others while in a drug-induced state; loss of job or family; irreversible damage to body organs; death caused by overdose.
- Pregnancy: Preeclampsia, abruptio placenta, premature rupture of the membranes, preterm delivery.
- Fetus and infant: Intrauterine growth retardation, congenital abnormalities (birth defects), medical problems in a newborn, including withdrawal syndromes to the drug, death of the fetus, stillbirth or infant death shortly after birth.



## TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Acknowledge that you have a problem and seek professional help.
- Advise your doctor about what drugs are used, frequency of use, how the drug was administered, when it was last used, any history of withdrawals or overdose. Also discuss any domestic violence or abuse that may be occurring.
- Appropriate laboratory tests will be obtained and prenatal tests will be performed to determine fetal well-being.
- Be open and honest with your family and close friends, and ask for their help. Avoid friends who tempt you to resume your habit.
- Treatment will involve a coordination of medical, social, nutritional and psychiatric help with long-term follow-up.
- Depending on the specific drug(s) of abuse, outpatient or inpatient withdrawal treatment may be indicated.
- Join self-help groups.
- Additional information available from:
  - Cocaine Abuse Hotline 1(800) COCAINE.
  - National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), [www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov).
  - Do It Now Foundation, Box 27568, Tempe, AZ 85285-7568, 480-736-0599; [www.doitnow.org](http://www.doitnow.org).
  - National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1-800-662-4357; [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov).

### MEDICATION

Metadone for narcotic abuse. This drug is a less potent narcotic used to decrease the severity of physical withdrawal symptoms. It can have undesirable side effects on the fetus.

### ACTIVITY

A doctor-approved exercise program is recommended.

### DIET

Eat a normal, well balanced diet that is high in protein. Vitamin supplements may be necessary if you suffer from malnutrition.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member abuse or are addicted to drugs and wants information about treatment.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.