

Teen drug addiction: a chronic illness

[Health & Medicine](#), [Drugs](#)



Drug addiction is a chronic disease, associated with mental illnesses, and similar to other chronic diseases such as type II diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease. No one chooses to be a drug addict or to develop heart disease. In my paper, I am going to research some issues of teenage substance abuse and examine some of the biological factors that caused drug abuse and addiction. I will also explain how the brain reacts to drugs. In addition, I will also provide statistics on the number of teens afflicted with drug abuse their race and gender.

Furthermore, I will be discussing how drug addiction affects the individual and their families, along with social, biological, psychological and vocational affects of the disease, and available community support and interventions. Good What is drug addiction? Addiction is a chronic, often relapsing brain disease that causes compulsive drug seeking and use despite harmful consequences to the individual that is addicted and to those around them.

Drug addiction is a brain disease because the abuse of drugs leads to changes in the structure and function of the brain. Although, it is true for most people the initial decision to take drugs is voluntary, overtime the changes in the brain caused by repeated drug abuse can affect a person's self-control and ability to make sound decisions, and at the same time send intense impulses to take drugs. Source? From a medical perspective, substance abuse is a syndrome or maladaptive pattern of substance use.

That result in a clinically significant impairment during a 12-month period, resulting on one or more of the following: recurring substance use causes a significant decrease in the ability to perform well and/or failure to fulfill

obligations at work school or home despite negative social or interpersonal consequences (McLennan, A. , 2010). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) issued by the American Psychiatric Association, defines “ substance dependence” as; “ when an individual persist in use of alcohol or other drugs despite problems related to use of the substance, substance dependence may then be diagnosed.

(DSM) defines “ substance abuse” as; a maladaptive pattern of substance use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as manifested by one (or more) of the following. These must re-occur within a 12-month period. Recurring substance use resulting in a failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home (e. g. , repeated absences or poor work performance related to substance use; substance related absences, suspensions or expulsions from school; neglect of children or household). Substance use disorders often affect a combination of psychological, biological, and environmental and social issues.

Many of the substances are included in the disorders, including alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, opiates, sedatives, hallucinogens, and halides, or PCP. Substance use usually results in the complex disorder, which is addiction (Danielson, C. , et. , al. 2010). Experts have identified four stages in the addiction process: Stage one, is the exploratory stage, stage two, is the recreational stage, stage three, is the abusive stage, and stage four, is the dependent stage that eventually develops into an addiction. Once the person is addicted to a substance, they often begin to abuse them.

Drug addiction most often results in a loss of choice. The desire to use the drug may have its roots in and need to ease the situation or unpleasant circumstance. This is dangerous because it is only one-step further away from using the drug for recreation and one-step closer to an addiction. Drug abuse is associated with the compulsivity that in turn leads to dependency and addiction. This is normally true; however, there are cases of individuals who abuse drugs without becoming dependent to them. Everyone's brain reacts differently to drugs. Source? Brain Reaction

When drugs enter the brain, they can interrupt the work and actually change how the brain performs its jobs. These changes are what lead to compulsive drug use, the hallmark of addiction (NIDA, 2010). Drugs are chemicals. They work in the brain by tapping into its communications system and interfering with the way nerve cells normally send, receive, and process information. Different drugs—because of their chemical structures—work differently. In fact, some drugs can change the brain in ways that last long after the person has stopped taking drugs, maybe even permanently. This is more likely when drugs are taken repeatedly.

All drugs of abuse—nicotine, cocaine, marijuana, and others—affect the brain's "reward" circuit, which is part of the limbic system. Normally, the reward circuit responds to pleasurable experiences by releasing the neurotransmitter dopamine, which creates feelings of pleasure, and tells the brain that this is something important—pay attention and remember it. Drugs hijack this system, causing unusually large amounts of dopamine to flood the system. Sometimes, this lasts for a long time compared to what

happens when a natural reward stimulates dopamine. This flood of dopamine is what causes the “ high” or euphoria associated with drug abuse.

These brain changes drive a person to seek out and use drugs compulsively, despite negative consequences such as stealing, losing friends, family problems, or other physical or mental problems brought on by drug abuse—this is addiction (NIDA, 2010). How does drug addiction affect the individual? Many teenagers face the problem of addiction. Some addictions are drugs, alcohol abuse and recurrent substance abuse, even when it is physically hazardous such as driving a car. Teens that are addicted feel a loss of control and are overwhelmed with the urge to search for and continue the use of drugs and alcohol despite negative consequences.

Trying to understand this self-destructive behavior is difficult repeated drug use causes long-lasting changes to the function to the brain and the way it looks. It alters the brain interfering with the ability to think clearly, make good judgment, control behavior and to feel normal without the drug. There is a widespread notion that adolescents self medicated depression with drugs and alcohol, society appears to overlook the possibility that the substance use may precede or predict depression (NIDA, 2010).

Psychological Affects A chronic illness could be caused by substance abuse or the opposite may be true, chronic illness could even cause substance abuse. Either way, diagnosis of two illnesses makes treatment of both conditions complex. Individuals with a disease or chronic illness have easier access to prescription medication, making excessive use more likely and abusive. Depression, boredom, and frustration are psychological factors that

can lead to a want to escape from reality. The need for acceptance as a result from alienation and oppression also contribute to the use to gain social acceptance (Falvo, 2005).

Physical, Social, and Biological Affects Chronic illness and disease have a cause and effect relationship with drug use. Some physical effects of alcohol dependence and use are important to examine. Initially, alcohol acts as a stimulant, the level of intoxication increases however, it acts as a depressant, causing physical coordination problems, ataxia and decreased ability to perform. Judgment may also be impaired. While increased levels of alcohol use can cause confusion, mild stupor, amnesia, and coma and could eventually lead to death.

Many negative, complex health issues are common from alcohol abuse. Some examples include blood abnormalities causing the presence of large abnormal red blood cells, a decrease in the number of bold white blood cells and platelets. Throat and esophagus cancer and liver disease are also common among many other medical diagnoses. Problems of the heart, liver and pancreas may develop, also muscle fiber destruction and weakness, mal-absorption of nutrients and vision problems are common due to the continued use of alcohol and drugs

Research An interesting finding from a new study published in the, American Journal of Preventive Medicine suggests that adolescents, particularly girls, who engage in sex behavior and drug use are at risk for future depression. The previous notion was that adolescents self medicate depression with sex and drugs not the other way around. Among boys, their findings suggest that

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binge drinking and marijuana use increased the likelihood of depression in boys more than four-fold.

From the information that is available regarding depression and substance use and abuse, it is evident that depression may contribute to substance use and abuse. Although, it is more likely that depression is the result of substance use and abuse (C. Danielson, et. al. , 2003). Good Second research project? Statistics To understand the startling impact addiction has on teens, statistics are needing to be examined. In the United States; " On average, in 2006, about 1. 2 million adolescents, each 12 to 17 years of age smoked cigarettes, 631, 000- drank alcohol, and 586, 000 -used marijuana.

In addition, about 49, 000 adolescents used inhalants, 27, 000- used hallucinogens, 13, 000-used cocaine, and 38, 000- used heroine. To continue with these phenomenal statistics, this was an average " day" in the United States. Nearly 8, 000 adolescents drank alcohol for the first time; 4, 300 - used illicit drugs for the first time; 4000- smoked their first cigarette, 3600- smoked marijuana for the first time, and another 2000 used pain relievers for non-medical reasons for the first time (Sussman , S. 2010)". Treatments, Interventions and Community Support

Alcohol and substance addiction initially requires detoxification and then a lifelong treatment plan that includes individual therapy, family and group counseling, and self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous. There is Ala Non and Ala Teen for families. Families that live with an addict need moral and emotional support. The individual and the families know that abstinence from alcohol and other substances is the goal of treatment These are the

many reasons why interventions and community support for teens are vital, for their well-being, and survival, getting the needed help for teens now, before they enter adulthood.

An article, " Drugs and Teen Substance Abuse," cited the most recent data about substance abuse facilities. The data collected about outpatient treatment and inpatient residential treatment facilities. There are more than 76, 000 youth in outpatient treatment facilities, 10, 000 in hospital residential treatment, and 1000 in hospital inpatient treatment.

Experimentation with drugs among teens is common. Teens have the tendency to feel indestructible and immune to the possible problems that their actions can cause themselves and others.

They are especially unaware of the link between their actions today and the consequences tomorrow. Using tobacco and alcohol at a young age increase the risk of using drugs later in life. Some teens seem to be able to experiment, use occasionally, stop and start again without becoming dependent on, or develop a need to use continually. Others will develop a tendency and addiction, often moving onto more serious drugs, causing harm to themselves and others (APA, 2010).

Most people go into drug treatment either because the court ordered them to do so, or because loved ones urged them to seek treatment. The good news is that, according to scientific studies, people who enter drug treatment programs in which they face " high" pressure" to deal with their addiction can benefit from treatment, regardless of the reason they sought treatment in the first place (NIDA, 2008)".

My newly learned knowledge of researching this topic has helped me better understand the disease process of drug addiction. I took a personal note to the subject; I chose this topic to help me personally deal with my son and his abuse of marijuana. I do believe drug addiction is a chronic disease similar to other chronic diseases such as type II diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease. No one chooses to be a drug addict or to develop heart disease.