

# Essay on drugs and alcohol

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



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## **Drugs and Alcohol**

### **Drug and Alcohol Abuse**

Drug and alcohol abuse is connected to emotional or psychological issues (Watts, 2014). There are some people who are able to use prescription drugs recreationally, without reaping negative consequences. However, there are others who experience addiction which can cause problems at home, work, school and in significant relationships. Drug and alcohol addiction usually starts with recreational use, until a dependency on the substance is formed. This is when the user or addict is unable to function without having the substance in their system.

Some individuals are more prone to drug and alcohol addiction than others (Marlatt, et al., 2005). As with many diseases and conditions, there are some who are more vulnerable than others. There are definitely higher risks for addiction in those who have immediate relatives with the same condition.

There are also some pre-existing psychological problems that can also increase the risk of drug and alcohol addiction, this includes depression, anxiety and paranoia. Besides these psychological triggers, there are also environmental factors that can contribute to this problem. Neglect or traumatic incidents as a child, early use of drugs and exposure to an environment where there is easy access to drugs are only some of the things that can contribute to early addiction.

## **Diagnosis**

In many cases, a very good friend of the addict or a family member who first raises concern about drug or alcohol abuse (Watts, 2014). This is usually done through behavioral observations. If an individual is suspected to be involved in substance abuse, a drug test will be done. This can be done through a urinary sample or a blood sample. The first port of call is a general practitioner or primary care physician. Several questions will be asked by the doctor in order to know more about the substance consumed. This includes the type of substance, the frequency and other questions pertaining to the habitual use of the substance.

During this time, the doctor may refer the patient to a psychologist who will be able to evaluate the patient if ever he or she may feel they have a problem (Marlatt, et al., 2005). Once an addiction problem is suspected, a specialist will enter the picture.

When there is both alcohol/drug abuse and a mental health problem present, it is called a co-occurring disorder (Watts, 2014). When a mental health problem goes untreated, the substance problem usually gets worse. A

specialist will be able to determine if there is a mental health disorder present even before the drug or alcohol abuse started.

## **Age of Onset**

The age of onset varies, depending on an individual. However, studies show that minors as early as 14 – 15 years of age are already experimenting with alcohol and drugs (Watts, 2014). During this time, the individuals take the substances recreationally. If they are at high risk of developing an addiction or dependency problem, the down spiral of abuse can start within a year or two years of first use. If there is a mental health problem present previous the substance abuse, the dependency can be more severe (Marlatt, et al., 2005). If there are preexisting tendencies and problems even before the abuse, addiction might come within a couple of months of first use. Studies show that individuals, teenagers in particular, who are exposed to environments where drug or alcohol abuse is rampant, the risk of developing a substance abuse problem is higher.

## **Symptoms**

Individuals who are suffering from drug and alcohol abuse usually exhibit both physical and emotional symptoms (Marlatt, et al., 2005). Many addicts are irritable, have mood swings and are secretive. They might not do very well within social groups and try to avoid contact with people who are not within their close circle. During the later portion of their abuse, they might start experiencing deteriorating relationships. Individuals who have an addiction problem will show signs of struggle in terms of their work, school or home life. Individuals who have a drug dependency or addiction problem will

have one or more of the following symptoms (Watts, 2014):

- Extremely high tolerance to the substance which has less of an effect on their body. This means that they need to get more in order to get the same pleasure.
- Signs of physical or withdrawal symptoms. This means that the patient will need to take the substance in order to avoid symptoms of withdrawal. When they go without the substance, they might start to feel deep anxiety.
- The patient takes a higher than intended dose of the substance or is drinking extreme amounts of alcohol
- They spend a large amount of time trying to get hold of the substance. This includes selling anything or everything just to get another hit.
- Social activities, or responsibilities are no longer a priority for the patient
- They continue to take it and might defend their abuse if told to stop.

## **Subtypes**

Substance abuse comes in many different forms (Watts, 2014). There are some individuals who are addicted to prescription drugs, where there are others who are addicted to illicit substances. Oxycodone addiction, opiate addiction and alcohol abuse are only some of the different types. There are complicated types when a patient is given a pain reliever in order to overcome an existing substance abuse problem, only to become addicted to the prescribed pain killer.

## **Treatment**

There are different types of treatment for this type of abuse (Watts, 2014).

There are in-house and out-patient types of rehabilitation centers. The

amenities and cost for these centers also differ. There are bunker-type centers for teens and luxurious rehabilitation resorts for celebrities. The most common type of treatment involves the 12-step program, where the patients are exposed to individuals who are also trying to overcome a substance abuse problem. This involves education on the reality of drug abuse as well as lessons on how to avoid temptation or relapse.

## **References**

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