

Substance Abuse. It's treatable.

Talk About It.

Glossary Of Terms

Abstinence: Refraining from further drug or alcohol use

Acetaminophens: Pain relievers (e.g. Tylenol) used to treat headaches, muscle aches, headaches, etc.

ACOA: A support group for adult children of alcoholics

Addict: A stigmatizing slang term for an individual with a substance use disorder

Assessment: A way to determine the prevalence of substance use disorder in a client or the extent of one's substance use (considers sociological, psychological, physical, and family factors, etc.)

Substance use disorder Treatment: Aims to reduce substance abuse

Addictive Personality: A trait/traits that predispose someone to substance abuse or develops in response to substance use

Adverse Reaction: A detrimental reaction to a drug (not the desired reaction)

Age at Onset: The age at which one's substance use began; an important factor in substance abuse disorder assessment

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA): A voluntary program concerned with [helping alcoholics](#) with recovery and continued sobriety

[Amphetamine](#): A behavioral stimulant; also known as meth, speed, crank

AOD: Stands for (Alcohol and Other Drugs)

AODA: Stands for (Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse)

Aspirin: An anti-inflammatory agent used for pain relief

Barbiturate: A class of sedative-hypnotic compounds that are chemically related through a six-membered ring structure

Benzodiazepine: A group of depressants used to induce sleep, prevent seizures, produce sedation, relieve anxiety and muscle spasms, etc.

Blood Alcohol Level/Concentration: The concentration level of alcohol in the bloodstream (expressed as a percentage by weight)

Caffeine: An alkaloid that acts as a diuretic and a stimulant (found in coffee, tea, etc.)

Carcinogen: A cancer-causing chemical agent

Central Nervous System (CNS): The brain and spinal cord

Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CADC): Manages clients in substance abuse programs to help with [substance use disorder recovery](#)

Cirrhosis: Chronic liver disease

Codeine: The pain-relieving sedative agent contained in [opium](#)

Codependence: A family member's or friend's suffering that is the result of the side effects of one's substance use disorder; it occurs when one takes responsibility for another's actions and helps that person avoid facing his or her problems directly to maintain the relationship

Cold Turkey: Abruptly quitting a drug by choice in order to try to quit long-term

Compulsion: A physical behavior one repeats involuntarily that can be harmful (e.g., substance use disorder)

Craving: A powerful and strong desire/urge for a substance; a symptom of the abnormal brain adaptations that result from substance use disorder

Crisis Intervention: The action taken when one's usual coping resources pose a threat to individual or family functioning

Cross-Dependence: The ability of one drug to prevent the withdrawal symptoms of one's physical dependence on another

Denial: One's failure to either admit or realize his or her substance use disorder or to recognize and accept the harm it can cause

Depressants: Sedatives that act on the CNS (e.g. to treat anxiety, high blood pressure, tension, etc.)

Depression: One of the most frequent types of distress resulting from substance use disorder; an ongoing state of sadness involving the inability to concentrate, inactivity, etc.

Detoxification ([Detox](#)): The process of removing a toxic substance (e.g. a drug) from the body

Disease: A condition featuring medically significant symptoms that often have a known cause

Doctor Shopping: Occurs when a patient requests care simultaneously from multiple physicians without their knowledge in order to receive higher amounts of medications

Dopamine: A chemical produced naturally by the body; functions in the brain as a neurotransmitter to provide feelings of well-being

Downers: Another name for depressants; these drugs can cause low moods (e.g. [alcohol](#), barbiturates, tranquilizers, etc.)

Drug Misuse: One's use of a drug not specifically recommended or prescribed when there are more practical alternatives; when drug use puts a user or others in danger

Drug Tolerance: A progressive state of decreased responsiveness to a drug

Dual-Diagnosis: Refers to having both a mental health disorder and having a substance abuse disorder.

DUI: Stands for driving under influence of alcohol or another illicit substance that impairs one's ability to drive

DWI: Stands for driving while intoxicated

Enabling: Helping a person with substance abuse do things they can or should be doing for themselves or supporting their continued misuse of alcohol and or drugs.

Endorphins: Opium-like substances produced by the brain; natural painkillers

Ethanol: The beverage type (ethyl) of alcohol

Euphoria: A pleasurable state of altered consciousness; one reason for the preference of one substance over another

Evidence-based Treatment: Scientifically validated treatment approaches

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS): Birth defects/abnormalities in babies of alcoholic and alcohol abusing mothers

Fetal Drug Syndrome (FDS): Birth defects/abnormalities in babies of drug abusing mothers

Food and Drug Administration (FDA): Administers federal laws regarding, for example, the safety and effectiveness of drugs

Habit: An outdated term for substance use disorder/physical dependence

Hallucinogen: Chemical substance that distorts perceptions, sometimes resulting in delusions or hallucinations

Harm Reduction: Often the first stage of substance use disorder treatment; reducing the harm associated with the substance use instead of stopping the target behavior

Heroin: A highly addictive substance usually administered intravenously

Hydrocodone: An effective narcotic analgesic first developed as a cough medication

Illicit Drugs: Drugs that are illegal to produce, use, and sell

Intoxication: A state of being drugged or poisoned; results from abuse of alcohol, barbiturates, toxic drugs, etc.

Legal Drugs: Everyday drugs not for medical use (e.g. alcohol, caffeine, carbohydrates, nicotine, etc.)

Methadone: A long-acting opiate (synthetically produced)

Morphine: A major sedative/pain reliever found in opium

Naloxone: An opioid antagonist that blocks the effects of opioid agonists

Naltrexone: An opioid antagonist that blocks the effects of opioids

Narcotic: A drug that produces sleep/drowsiness and that also relieves pain while being potentially dependence producing

Negative Reinforcement: Repetitive behavior to avoid something unpleasant

Nicotine: Tobacco's extremely toxic main active ingredient

Obsession: A mental behavior one repeats involuntarily that can be harmful (e.g., needing an alcoholic drink)

Opiate: The poppy's natural ingredients and their derivatives (opium, morphine, [codeine](#), and heroin)

Opioids: Opium's synthetic form

Over-the-Counter Drugs: Legal non-[prescription drugs](#)

Oxycodone: A medicine used for relief of moderate to high pain

Painkillers: Analgesic substances (opioids and nonopioids)

Physical Dependence: The body's physiologic adaptation to a substance

Placebo: A substance with no pharmacological elements that may elicit a reaction because of a patient's mindset

Polysubstance Abuse: Concurrent abuse of more than one substance

Post-Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS): Withdrawal symptoms after initial acute withdrawal

Psychedelic Drugs: Produce an intense shift of mental state; causing hallucinations

Psychoactive Drug: A mind- and behavior-altering substance

Psychological Dependence: One's compulsion to use a psychologically based drug for pleasure; may lead to drug misuse

Rapid Detox: Anesthesia-assisted detoxification (injection of high doses of an opiate antagonist, followed by an infusion of naloxone)

Recidivism: One's return to a negative behavior (relapse) (e.g. drug use) including possible legal intervention (e.g re-arrest)

Recovery Rates: The percentage of addicted persons undergoing treatment who reduce or eliminate substance use

Recovery: Reducing or ceasing substance abuse and engaging in a lifestyle is supportive of ongoing abstinence

[Relapse Prevention](#): A therapeutic process that interrupts beliefs and behaviors that result in lifestyle dysfunction and return to alcohol and drug use.

Relapse: Symptom recurrence after a period of sobriety or drug use cessation

Remission: A symptom-free period

Screening: Measurement tool for the extent of one's substance use/abuse (e.g., self-completion questionnaire/life-history assessment)

Self-Help Group: Group of individuals dealing with similar issues that meets to support each other and share helpful information (e.g. AA)

Side Effects: Secondary effects of a drug; these are usually undesirable

Societal Denial: Society's denial of the response for and consequences of alcohol and/or drug abuse

Stimulant: Drugs that act on the Central Nervous System, resulting in alertness, excitation, and wakefulness

Substance Abuse (Chemical Dependence): A maladaptive pattern of recurrent substance use that leads to impairment or distress that is clinically significant

Therapeutic Community: A setting where people with similar issues can meet to support each other's recovery

Tolerance: Condition in which one must increase their use of a drug for it to have the same effect

Toxicity: A degree of poisonousness

Tranquilizers: A type of drug that can help relieve the symptoms of anxiety or sleepiness

Trigger: Anything that results in psychological and then physical relapse

Ups or Uppers: Drugs that produce an excitability effect (e.g. stimulants, amphetamines)

Urges: Less powerful desires than cravings; can be suppressed by willpower

User: Term used to describe one who uses [alcohol or drugs](#)

Withdrawal Symptoms: Physical and emotional symptoms that generally occur between 4 to 72 hours after cessation of alcohol and drug use (e.g., watery eyes, yawning, loss of appetite, panic, insomnia, vomiting, shaking, irritability, jitters, etc.)

Withdrawal Syndrome: Combined reactions or behaviors that result from the abrupt cessation of a drug one is physically dependent on