

Treating Drug Abuse and Addiction



Treatment for a substance use disorder, or drug addiction, varies with your needs. Some people go through treatment only once. Others return to it off and on throughout their lives.



Recovery is a lifelong process

Recovery begins when you get help for your substance use disorder. Then, you'll slowly start to build a new life and lifestyle. It may not be easy. But with the support of others, you can succeed. During recovery, you'll go through 3 stages. How long each stage lasts varies with each person.

Early recovery

During this stage, you'll focus on stopping your drug abuse or addiction. Most likely, you'll get help from a therapist, addiction counselor, or healthcare provider. You may also go to self-help groups on a regular basis. You'll avoid people or places that might tempt you to use drugs.

Middle recovery

During this time, you'll work on changing your life. You may change your values, move, or go back to school. You might start new, healthy relationships. And you might end ones that aren't as healthy. You may even try to make up for harm you caused others while using drugs. You will continue the lifestyle changes and strategies that support your sobriety and access healthcare providers or addiction counselors when you are concerned about a slip.

Late recovery

This stage will last for the rest of your life. You're feeling stronger and healthier. Now, you may look for a greater sense of purpose. You may focus on the things that matter to you most. These may include your family, your beliefs, or lending a hand to others. You will continue to use the lifestyle changes and strategies that support your sobriety and get help from doctors or addiction counselors when you are concerned about a slip.

Types of drug treatment

- **Residential treatment.** You live in a drug-free setting with others who have the same problem. Often, your stay in community residential treatment lasts about a month, but it could last up to 6 months. During this time, you see a therapist or addiction counselor.
- **Outpatient therapy.** You see a therapist or addiction counselor while living your normal life. You may see your therapist by yourself. Or you may be part of a group. In some cases, your family may see your therapist too.

- **Self-help groups.** These offer you support and encouragement. There are also support groups for the loved ones of people addicted to drugs.
- **Medicine.** Your treatment may include certain medicines, such as methadone, disulfiram, buprenorphine, acamprosate, or naltrexone.
- **Alternative treatments.** These may include acupuncture, hypnosis, or biofeedback. Ask your healthcare provider about them.

For help finding a treatment program in your area, go to the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\) treatment locator at www.findtreatment.samhsa.org](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.org).

When times get tough

A substance use disorder is never really cured. It's a lifelong recovery process. Sometimes, no matter how well you're doing, you may be tempted. If so, you can:

- Call your sponsor. This is someone in your self-help group who watches out for you.
- Talk to your therapist, healthcare provider, or someone else you trust.
- Make a list of how much you've achieved.
- Find something to distract you. Go to a movie, go out for a walk, or call a friend.

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