

What do I need to know about Substance (Drug and/or Alcohol) Use Disorder?



Substance Use Disorder, also known as addiction, is a chronic condition that affects the brain and the behavior of people who use drugs or alcohol. Chronic refers to a condition or disorder that persists for a long time or comes back. It makes it hard for them to stop using alcohol and/or drugs. With a substance use disorder, it is important to know that:

- It causes harmful and self-destructive behaviors (like lying or stealing)
- It can affect anyone
- It is a health condition, not a choice
- It can be treated and managed, just like other chronic illnesses like asthma or diabetes
- It not only affects the person with the substance use disorder—it also impacts their families, friends, and their community

It may not be easy or clear to know if someone has a substance use disorder. Here are some signs:

- Unable to stop using alcohol and/or drugs even though there has been a negative impact on their life
- Loss of control and trouble limiting the amount of substances used
- Denial or blaming other people, rather than alcohol and/or drugs, as the cause of their problems
- Seeking out alcohol and/or drugs to feel “normal”
- Alcohol and/or drug withdrawal (an unpleasant physical reaction) happens when the brain becomes dependent on a substance. Symptoms include:
 - anxiousness
 - irritability
 - sweating
 - shaking
 - paranoia

How do I address Substance Use Disorder?

- Assess a person's readiness for treatment. Do not push or judge them.
- Communicate kindly with people. Offer to help them seek treatment if needed.
- Help them feel safe by listening to their concerns. Substance Use Disorders are chronic conditions that can be treated.
- Assure them that treatment works. Let them know that recovery is possible.
- Encourage people to speak to others who have successfully completed treatment.

Looking for help? Check out some of these Los Angeles resources:

- CHLA Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Program

➤ **How to use a QR code:**

1. Open your phone's camera.
2. Focus on the QR code on the right.
3. A link will appear on the screen after a few seconds.
4. Tap on the link. This will open the website on your browser.
5. If nothing happens, type the web address into your phone's browser:

<https://www.chla.org/adolescent-and-young-adult-medicine/substance-use-prevention-and-treatment-program>



- LA County Substance Abuse Service Helpline (available 24/7): (844) 804-7500
- Los Angeles Helpline: 211 or 211LA.org
- Alcoholics Anonymous Family Groups of Southern California
- Alcoholics Anonymous Los Angeles
- RecoverLA.org (phone app)

How to Recognize and Respond to an Opioid Overdose

Preparation:

- Obtain Naloxone (Narcan) from your healthcare provider or local pharmacy. This is a life-saving medication that reverses opioid overdose.
- Keep Naloxone in your purse, car, and/or home so that it is readily available.

Symptoms of an Opioid Overdose include:



Not breathing or shallow breathing.



Cannot be awakened or cannot speak.



Skin feels clammy and cold.



Lips and nails are blue.



Gurgling sounds or snoring loudly.



Pupils are pinpoint.

What to do:



Shout and do a sternal (breastbone) rub by applying pressure with knuckles to center of chest (sternum).



Call 911.



Spray the full dose of naloxone* (Brand Name: Narcan) into one nostril.



If not breathing, begin rescue breathing.



If no response after 2-5 minutes, give a second full dose in the other nostril.



Place in recovery position and wait for help to arrive.

Image source: https://www.recoverla.org/staying_safe/how-to-recognize-and-respond-to-an-opioid-overdose/