

18. Substance Use & Addiction Awareness

18.1 Overview

Substance use disorders (SUDs) occur when recurrent use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs causes significant impairment or distress.

According to **WHO (2023)**, over **35 million people globally** suffer from drug-use disorders. Alcohol contributes to over **3 million deaths annually**, and tobacco kills **8 million** each year. ([WHO Substance Use, 2023](#))

In India, the **National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (AIIMS)** estimates around **57 million alcohol-dependent individuals** and increasing opioid misuse. ([AIIMS-NDDTC, 2022](#))

18.2 Causes / Risk Factors

- Peer pressure, social environment, and easy availability.
- Genetic predisposition and mental health disorders.
- Chronic stress, trauma, or lack of social support.
- Neurobiological changes leading to craving and tolerance.

18.3 Symptoms / Indicators

- Strong urge to use the substance despite harm.
- Neglect of responsibilities and withdrawal symptoms.
- Physical signs: weight loss, red eyes, slurred speech, tremors.
- Behavioral changes: secrecy, aggression, mood swings.

18.4 Prevention / Lifestyle

WHO recommends multi-level prevention:

- School and community awareness on drug risks.
- Parental supervision and open communication.
- Policies limiting alcohol/tobacco advertising and sale.
- Stress management and healthy coping mechanisms.

18.5 Screening / Diagnosis

Healthcare professionals use tools like:

- **AUDIT** (Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test).
- **DAST-10** for drug screening.
- Clinical evaluation for withdrawal symptoms or comorbid mental illness.

18.6 Management / Public Health Perspective

- WHO's **Mental Health and Substance Use Division** promotes integrated prevention and treatment.
- India's **Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan** focuses on awareness and rehabilitation.
- Treatment includes counseling, detoxification, medication-assisted therapy, and community support groups (e.g., AA, NA).
Public health emphasizes destigmatization and early intervention.

Summary Points

- Addiction is a chronic, treatable disorder.
- Prevention through education and policy is key.
- Integrated community-based care improves recovery outcomes.