

Drugs & Addiction

Scout Cleveland

A Brief on Drug Addiction



An often overlooked aspect of addiction is that it is an **illness**. Many people don't understand or fail to understand why people become addicted to drugs.

Those who become addicted to drugs do not **lack morals**. Drug addiction can affect your brain severely and oftentimes that means the inability to quit even if you have the willpower to. They might have decided to start taking the drug at first, but over time it stops being a choice.

There has been significant development in treatment for those suffering with addiction now that scientists know precisely how drugs affect your brain. **Addiction is a treatable, curable condition.**

Drug Use and Overdose



Here are some statistics from the The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) in 2020.

58.7 percent (or 162.5 million people) used tobacco, alcohol, or an illicit drug in the past month (current user).

21.4 percent (or 59.3 million people) used illicit drugs in the past year.

14.5 percent (or 40.3 million people) had a Substance Use Disorder in the past year

From 1999-2000, more than 932,000 drug overdose deaths were recorded. In 2020, there were about 92,000 recorded overdose related deaths in the U.S. alone, and 75% of them involved opioids.

What do drugs do to the brain?



Drugs flood parts of your brain with dopamine. When flooded, these areas—areas that are used to motivate you to repeat enriching activities like socialization and eating—produce a “high” which is intensely pleasurable.

The brain adjusts to this excess of dopamine by producing less of it, or reducing the effectiveness of it. Over time this can lead to the body tolerating a drug, leading a person to take even more to feel previous effects. This also causes those past enriching activities to be less enjoyable than they were before. This can lead to a **dependence** on drugs to feel that same pleasure and happiness.

Once you are dependant on a drug, **withdrawal** symptoms can occur anytime you’re away from it. Symptoms vary, but can include tremors, cravings, and agitation.

*Specific Drug
Information*



Synthetic Cannabinoids



Synthetic chemicals that can be sprayed on plant material to be smoked, or sold as liquids that are vaporized and inhaled.

Usage Effects:

Short-term: rapid heart rate, violent behavior, suicidal thoughts, symptoms of psychosis, altered perception

Long-term: withdrawal, anxiety, depression, headaches

Heroin



Opioid drug made from morphine. Similar effects to prescription opioids for pain relief. Misuse of these may lead to later heroin use.

Usage Effects:

Short-term: slowed heart rate and breathing, nausea, itching, clouded thinking, euphoria, dry mouth

Long-term: abscesses, collapsed veins, infection in heart lining, pneumonia

Fentanyl



Synthetic opioid that is 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine. One of the most common drugs involved in overdose deaths in the United States.

Usage Effects:

Short-term: confusion, sedation, breathing difficulties, unconsciousness

Long-term: possible brain damage, withdrawal, severe cravings, vomiting

Drug addiction treatment is oftentimes not a cure. Addiction is a chronic disease, and there are real and dangerous effects to quitting without treatment. A person can't simply stop taking a drug and not be addicted anymore.

There are several steps for proper drug treatment: detoxification, behavioral counseling, medication, evaluation and treatment, and long-term follow up.

Drug addiction is not easy to overcome, nor easy to treat, but treatment is possible. The national drug addiction helpline offered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration is 1-800-662-4357



Drug Addiction Treatment Options



✦ Work Cited

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