

## How Is Sex Addiction Treated?

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## What Is Sex Addiction?

Sex addiction (aka hypersexual disorder) is a condition that causes a person living with it to become excessively preoccupied with sexual thoughts and behaviors. In some instances, they might become so preoccupied that the condition disrupts their daily functioning.

They'll also continue to engage in sexual activities regardless of any negative consequences they might cause. Sex addiction is sometimes referred to as compulsive sexual behavior.

It's important not to mistake a high libido for sex addiction. In most cases, sex addiction will disrupt a person's day-to-day life and potentially affect personal relationships. A person with this condition will expend an extreme amount of time and means fulfilling their sexual urges. Sexual behaviors they might exhibit include:

- Spending an excessive amount of time-consuming [pornographic content](#) or masturbating
- Paying for sex
- Cheating on partners
- Habitually visiting strip clubs

Many people living with sex addiction operate under the false belief that they can manage their symptoms. However, without adequate treatment, the condition will not simply go away. This article looks into some of the most common signs of sex addiction and how the disorder is treated.

## Signs of Sex Addiction

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), which defines and categorizes mental health conditions, doesn't list sex addiction as a mental condition.

As a result, signs and symptoms of sex addiction could be challenging to highlight.

Some of the most common indicators that you might have sex addiction include:

- Being unable to stop yourself from engaging in certain sexual behaviors
- Becoming distressed when you are prevented from engaging in sexual activities and behaviors
- Neglecting essential aspects of your life, such as work and personal relationships, to engage in sexual activities and behaviors
- Engaging in risky sexual activities like having sex in public
- Continuing to engage in risky sexual behavior at the expense of your physical and mental health
- Masturbating compulsively and frequently

## Causes of Sex Addiction

A combination of biological and physiological factors could cause a person to develop sex addiction. However, there is no single cause for it. Some research points at a chemical imbalance in the brain being the cause of sex addiction. But, there isn't enough evidence to conclude that this could be a definite cause.

Certain medications like those used in the treatment of Parkinson's disease have been linked to the development of compulsive sexual behaviors.

## Treatment for Sex Addiction

Before treatment for sex addiction commences, you must first have been diagnosed with the condition by a doctor or other certified healthcare professional. Like with many mental health conditions, sex addiction can be difficult to diagnose.

An extensive look into your medical history will be done to make a definite diagnosis and ensure that you are not exhibiting symptoms of another disorder. Treatment for sex addiction first involves identifying the underlying cause or trigger for your compulsive sexual urges and behaviors.

The most common course of treatment for mental health conditions like sex addiction involves psychotherapy and medication. While psychotherapy is typically the first line of treatment used for sex addiction, certain medication might be prescribed alongside therapy, depending on the form and severity of symptoms a person with this condition exhibits.

Depending on the severity of a person's condition, treatment could either be done out of the comfort of your home or in a treatment center that's specialized in treating addictions. Treatment centers have the advantage of helping you focus solely on recovery.

## Psychotherapy

There are many forms of psychotherapy used in the treatment of mental health conditions. For sex addiction specifically, the following are typically used:

- **Cognitive-behavioral Therapy (CBT):** CBT is one of the most common forms of psychotherapy used to treat many mental health conditions. With sex addiction, CBT aims to help a person living with this condition learn what triggers the compulsive behaviors and thoughts they engage in and how to stop them. You are also taught healthy coping mechanisms to help you handle your triggers.
- **Motivational Enhancement Therapy:** This is a form of therapy that allows the person living with the condition and their therapist to work collaboratively towards finding a treatment for the person's symptoms. It focuses on tapping into a person's motivation to change their negative behaviors.

## Medication

There's currently no medication developed for the treatment of sex addiction. Certain drugs like selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) have been prescribed off-label to help a person living with this condition cope with the more disruptive symptoms of the disorder.

Medications that might be prescribed to help treat some symptoms of sex addiction include:

- **Mood stabilizers:** Mood stabilizers are typically administered for treating symptoms of bipolar disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). They might also help a person with sex addiction experience a decrease in compulsive sexual urges. Some common mood stabilizers include Lamictal and Tegretol.
- **SSRIs:** SSRIs were developed for the treatment of depression and anxiety disorders. They could also help in controlling the compulsive behaviors a person with sex addiction might exhibit. Some common SSRIs include Zoloft, Prozac, Paxil, and Celexa.

## Treatment Programs

While in a treatment program, both medication and psychotherapy will typically be employed to treat sex addiction. Treatment programs could be done in either an

inpatient or outpatient facility.

While an outpatient facility gives you more freedom to dictate the pace of your treatment, inpatient facilities are highly recommended. Opting for an inpatient treatment center also gives you the opportunity to get the treatment you need in an environment that will be mostly free of triggers.

An inpatient treatment center also allows you to meet and listen to other people who understand the struggle you are going through.

In picking a treatment facility, it's crucial to choose one that not only specializes in treating addictions but focuses on treating sex addiction specifically.

## Coping With Sex Addiction

The first step to coping with sex addiction is admitting to yourself that you have a problem. Because sex addiction isn't a recognized mental health condition, it can be difficult to diagnose. Its symptoms can also seem less apparent than other mental health conditions. If any of the signs of the condition listed above resonate with you or someone you know, it's essential to consult a healthcare professional and get a definite diagnosis.

Other things that could help you cope with this condition include:

- **Joining a support group:** If you or someone you know lives with sex addiction, joining a support group like Sex Addicts Anonymous can be of immense help. Seeing and speaking to other people who also have this condition can help you feel less shame or embarrassment about having the condition.
- **Get rid of your triggers:** If you have a stash of pornographic content or any other triggers that cause you to engage in compulsive sexual behaviors, it can be helpful to remove them from your home
- **Find healthy distractions:** Find a healthy distraction that you can engage in whenever you get the urge to engage in a sexual act. This could be exercising or meditating.

## A Word From Verywell

People with sex addiction often experience an immense amount of shame and embarrassment. They also sometimes falsely believe that keeping their symptoms to

themselves will help them get rid of the condition. However, sex addiction can impact your physical and mental health, so it's important to seek help from a certified healthcare professional.

## 6 Sources

Verywell Mind uses only high-quality sources, including peer-reviewed studies, to support the facts within our articles. Read our editorial process to learn more about how we fact-check and keep our content accurate, reliable, and trustworthy.

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