

Substance use disorder

Know the warning signs and treatment options

Substance use disorder is using drugs in a way that harms you or that leads you to harm others. It can range from mild to severe. Moderate to severe substance use disorder is sometimes called addiction.

Substance use disorder is a disease. It's not a weakness or a lack of willpower. It's your choice to begin using a drug. But as you use it more, your brain begins to change. This change can lead to a craving to use the drug, and this can influence how you act. This disorder can develop from the use of almost any type of substance, including alcohol, illegal drugs, prescription drugs or over-the-counter drugs.

When someone has a substance use disorder, they are not always able to meet work, home or school duties. They may be late to work, use drugs in dangerous situations or may have relationship problems caused by drugs.

Signs of substance misuse

- Changes in sleeping or eating habits, less attention to dressing and grooming
- Mood swings or not caring about the future
- Sneaky behavior, lying or stealing
- Poor family relationships, or relationships that are getting worse
- New problems at work or school, or problems with the law
- Red eyes, a sore throat, a dry cough or needle marks on the body
- Small, "pinpoint" pupils in the eyes, slurred speech or an unsteady walk
- Losing weight without trying to, or not feeling like eating
- Frequent, unexplained absences from work or social obligations
- Unreliability in keeping appointments and meeting deadlines
- Confusion or difficulty concentrating or recalling details and instructions

Treatment options

If someone you care about has substance use disorder, you know how hard it can be. You know how living with or being close to someone who has problems with drug use can change your life. But family members, friends and even colleagues and managers can play an important role in helping someone recover from substance use disorder.

Treatment for substance use disorder usually includes group therapy, one or more types of counseling and drug education.

It's hard to get someone who uses drugs into treatment if they don't want it.

These tips may help you get a treatment discussion started:

- Talk to the person. Say clearly how the person's drug use is harming you and them and that you will take action if they don't seek help.
- Stop making excuses. Do not cover up for missed work or missed activities with children. Don't lie or stretch the truth to help the person.
- Be ready and able to help when a decision is made to get treatment.

After the choice for treatment has been made:

- Make sure the home contains no drugs or items that help people use drugs.
- Be involved and patient. Attend recovery meetings with your loved one and be supportive.
- Be aware that your loved one may seem like a different person after they are drug-free. You may need to build a new relationship.
- Understand that you have the right to know how recovery is going, but you should ask about it in a respectful way.
- Help your loved one plan how to respond to a relapse. Most people relapse after treatment. This doesn't mean that the treatment failed. Try to help your loved one see relapse as a chance to do better and keep working on skills to avoid drug use.
- Focus on the positive actions your loved one is making.

Are you a manager concerned one of your staff members has a substance misuse disorder?

Consider these tips:

- Consult with the human resources department about your organization's substance misuse policy and testing procedures.
- Focus on the staff member's performance and observable behavior. Do not make accusations or diagnoses about substance use.
- Document the behavior, the performance issues and the observable signs of alcohol or drug use.

Your program can help you start a conversation with your staff member that is struggling with substance misuse and will work with you to explore strategies for dealing with the problem.

If you or someone you care about is experiencing substance misuse, help is available. Your Employee Assistance Program is completely confidential and available 24/7/365. Give us a call at 1-800-450-1327 (TTY 711) or visit Member.MagellanHealthcare.com (enter Principal Core).