

SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDERS

Different substances affect the brain in different ways. People use these substances because of these effects. They include: feelings of pleasure and decreased feelings of distress.

Substance abuse disorders include:

Abuse of alcohol or drugs which leads to work, school, home, health or legal problems
Dependence on alcohol or drugs

Symptoms of substance dependence:

Tolerance for the substance - the person needs increased amounts over time or gets less effect with use

Problems with withdrawal- the person experiences withdrawal symptoms or uses drugs to relieve withdrawal symptoms

Use of larger amounts over longer periods than intended

Problems in cutting down or controlling use

The person gives up or reduces important social , occupational or recreational activities because of substance use

Substances which are abused:

Alcohol makes people less alert and impairs concentration and coordination. Long term problems with alcohol use can occur in many areas- physical, psychological and social. People who use alcohol are more likely to be introduced to other drugs.

Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug in the United States. Marijuana abuse is associated with mental health problems: anxiety, depression and in young adults it may increase the risk of developing schizophrenia

Opioids- includes **heroin** - highly addictive drugs. Heroin produces a short-term feeling of euphoria, well-being and relief of pain. People who use heroin are at a high risk for suicide.

Sedatives and Tranquilizers are used to treat anxiety and sleep problems. When used long term, these medications can increase the risk of falls and cognitive impairment in older persons.

Cocaine- is a highly addictive stimulant drug. Cocaine gives very strong euphoric effects.

Long term use can cause mental health problems such as paranoia, aggression, anxiety and depression

Amphetamines are stimulants and have a temporary effect of increasing energy and apparent mental alertness. When the effect wears off, the person may experience a range of problems including depression, irritability, agitation, increased appetite and sleepiness.

Hallucinogens- including ecstasy- affect the person's perceptions of reality. They may also cause a rapid, intense emotional change. Long term effects of ecstasy are of concern. They may include damage to nerve cells in the brain that use a chemical messenger called serotonin.

Inhalants are breathable chemical vapors that produce mind-altering effects, such as euphoria to hallucinations. These inhalants include paint thinner, glue and gasoline.

Tobacco use is wide-spread. People with mental health disorders are twice likely to smoke cigarettes as people without. Some persons with mental health problems use tobacco as a self-medication to improve mood and cognitive functioning.