

# Frequently Asked Questions – Drug Abuse

## Why do people use drugs?

Basically people use drugs because they like the way drugs make them feel. All drugs that are addicting can activate and affect the brain's pleasure circuit.

## What is addiction?

Addiction is a disorder that affects your brain and your behavior. You have control over your choice to start using drugs. Over time, your brain actually changes so that a powerful urge to use drugs controls your behavior. This is what it means to be addicted to drugs. Someone who is addicted uses drugs despite the consequences.

## What drugs can cause addiction?

People can become addicted to both illegal drugs and drugs that doctors prescribe. Commonly abused illegal drugs include marijuana, PCP, LSD, speed, cocaine and crack, and heroin. People can also become addicted to things they may not think of as drugs, such as alcohol and nicotine.

## Aren't prescription drugs safe?

Prescription drugs are safe and there is little chance of addiction if taken correctly. However, prescription drugs can be dangerous if they are abused. For example, if you take more than you need or when the drug is not needed. This can happen with painkillers and anti-anxiety drugs.

## How do I know if I have a problem?

You have a problem if you keep craving and using a drug even if it is causing problems. These may be problems with your health, with money, with work, or with your relationships with family or friends. Your friends and family may be aware you are having a problem before you do, because of changes in your behavior.



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## Can addiction be treated?

Yes. Addiction is a chronic disease. During the course of treatment, there may be relapses. It may take a number of attempts and different types of treatment before you can remain free of drugs or alcohol.

## Why should I quit?

Breaking your addiction is the only way to stop the problems drugs are causing in your life. It may not be easy to quit. Your efforts will be rewarded. Rewards include better health, improved relationships with the people in your life and a sense of accomplishment that only living drug-free can give you. As you think about quitting, it may help to make a list of your reasons to quit.

## How do I stop?

The first step in breaking addiction is realizing that you have a problem.

- Commit to quitting. Once you decide to quit, make a plan.
- Get help from your health care provider. He or she can be your strongest ally. Talk to your health care provider even if you are trying to quit a drug that was prescribed. Your health care provider may be able to prescribe medication that makes you less likely to crave the addictive drug.
- Talking with your health care provider or a counselor about your problems and your drug use can be helpful too.
- Get support. Ask about support groups at your local VA. There may be support groups like Narcotic Anonymous or Alcoholics Anonymous locally. These groups are dedicated to helping people who have addictions. They want you to succeed, and they will give you the tools and support you need to quit and move on with your life. Ask your family and friends for support, too.

