

# National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Treatment and Recovery



<https://www.drugabuse.gov/>

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# Treatment and Recovery

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## What is treatment?



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Treatment can help people stop using drugs. Treatment can include counseling, medicine, or both. It can help people fight urges to use drugs again. It can also help them take back control of their lives.

People start taking drugs for different reasons. Sometimes they might start as a way to fit in with other people. Or they might have problems in their lives, like family trouble, money trouble, or problems at work. They might not know how else to cope. But drugs can make these problems worse.

Drug use can mess up every part of a person's life. So, in treatment, people need help to improve all areas of their lives. This means working on a few things, like:

- their relationships
- their ability to work or go to school
- how they have fun
- how they deal with problems

Treatment is for anyone using or misusing drugs:

- Treatment can help people who are just starting to get addicted.
- You don't have to be at "rock bottom" for treatment to work.

NEXT: [Why does a person need treatment?](#)

# Why does a person need treatment?

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Most people who are addicted to drugs can't stop using them just because they want to. Without drugs, they will often feel very sick. They won't feel better until their bodies and brains stop craving the drugs. Some medicines can make it easier to stop using certain drugs without feeling sick.

But getting a drug out of a person's system is just the first stage of treatment.

People with a drug addiction often stop taking care of themselves and their responsibilities. They focus on getting and using drugs.

## **People with drug problems might:**

- **stop taking care of their family, their work, or their community**
  - People with drug addictions might forget things that matter to them. They have trouble keeping promises.
- **stop taking care of their health**
  - People with drug addictions might not eat or sleep well. They might not clean their teeth. They might not go to the doctor when they get sick. Their drug use might have caused other health problems.
- **stop enjoying the things that made them feel good**
  - When people are on drugs, they stop caring about hobbies, interests, and friends.

They need to relearn how to live without drugs.

Talking with doctors or counselors in treatment can help. They are trained to listen and help people solve personal problems.

Call **1-800-662-HELP (4357)** or visit SAHMSA's [Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](#) at any time to find drug and counseling treatment near you.

NEXT: [Does drug treatment work?](#)

# Does drug treatment work?

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Yes. People who get treatment and stick with it can stop using drugs. They can change their lives so they don't go back to taking drugs. They have to try hard. They might have to try many times. Sometimes it takes a long time. But treatment does work.

It's important to get treatment for as long as you need it. If you don't think your treatment plan is working, ask your doctor if there's another plan that would work better. It's important that you meet with your doctor or counselor often to make sure your treatment is right for you.

NEXT: [What are the treatment options?](#)

# What are the treatment options?

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Different types of treatment work for different people. It depends on how sick a person is and what drugs the person is addicted to.

It also depends on the person. Each person is different. What works for one person might not work for someone else. It's important for people to talk with their doctor about a treatment plan that's just right for them.

Some treatment happens in hospitals. People might stay there for days, weeks, or months. Other treatment happens during the day at doctor's offices or clinics. People do not stay overnight. Doctors and counselors should use counseling and/or medicines to treat an addiction if possible, depending on the drug that is being misused.

## Counseling

Talking about your feelings with counselors is an important type of treatment. It can help people with any type of drug addiction. Sometimes sessions are just between you and a counselor. Sometimes family members will join a counseling session. Or you might talk with other people in treatment, in a group led by a counselor.

Talking helps people with drug addictions:

- understand why they got addicted
- see how drugs changed their behavior
- learn how to deal with problems so they won't go back to using drugs
- learn to avoid places, people, and situations where they might be tempted to use drugs

Counseling can be hard to do at first, but can be a necessary part of treatment.

Even after treatment ends, people still may need help. People can go to support groups, use programs on their phones or computers to talk to counselors, or live in recovery housing.

## Medicines

People with an addiction to some drugs can take medicine to help with uncomfortable symptoms of withdrawal. Withdrawal can feel different for

different drugs. Going off a drug can make a person feel like they have a terrible case of the flu, might make them feel really sad and worried, or cause the shakes and lots of pain in the body.

After withdrawal, there are other medicines that can help people who use certain drugs. Medicines can help people stop using alcohol or tobacco. They can also help with addictions to opioids, like heroin and prescription pain relievers.

If someone gets treatment with medicine, it's best to also be in counseling.

NEXT: [What is recovery?](#)



# What is recovery?

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Recovery from addiction means a person has stopped using drugs. At this point, they have learned new ways of dealing with problems. Someone in recovery is making positive changes in their health, social activities, and values.

Recovery from a drug addiction can continue through someone's whole life. This is because a drug addiction is a brain disorder. An addiction can stay with a person for a long time.

But with treatment, a person can stop using drugs. They can improve their health and wellness. And then, they are in recovery.

NEXT: [What is a relapse?](#)

# What is a relapse?

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A person who's trying to stop using drugs can make mistakes, feel bad, and start using again. This return to drug use is called a relapse. Relapse is common and normal and happens to a lot of people recovering from drug addictions. People will often have one or more relapses along the way. It takes practice to learn how to live without drugs.

Stopping drug use is like trying to diet and lose weight. It's hard to learn to do things differently, like eat less, exercise more, and avoid some favorite foods. It's easy to slip up, eat too much, and gain back the weight. But then you have to try again.

It's the same with quitting drugs. People with drug addictions might get treatment, slip up, and then go back to treatment many times before it works. If that happens, the person should get back into treatment as quickly as possible.

## Danger of Overdose

For some drugs, a relapse can be very dangerous—even deadly. If a person stops taking drugs and then takes the amount they used before quitting, they can easily overdose. Their body is no longer used to having the same amount of the drug in its system. An overdose happens when a drug causes serious, harmful symptoms or death.

This is why it's important to take a treatment plan seriously. Treatment can help to lower the chance of a drug relapse and overdose.

NEXT: [How can friends and family help?](#)

# How can friends and family help?

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Some people want treatment so they can learn how to stop using drugs. They want to get their lives back.

Other people don't want treatment. They are so deep in their drug addiction that they aren't ready for help. Many people who use drugs go into treatment because the police, a judge, their job, or family members make them do it. It might take a while for them to understand that they have a problem and want to stop using drugs. But treatment can work even when someone doesn't want it.

When friends and family show that they care, it can help people stick with treatment, even when it's very hard.

If you're an adult, there are many things you can do to help someone in treatment.

- Find them treatment services and information.
- Offer rides to treatment and support groups.
- Remind them to take any medicine their doctor gives them.
- Help them find a place to live, if they need one.
- Help them get a job, if they need one.
- Find things to do that will take their mind off drugs.
- Help them avoid places and people that might tempt them to take drugs again.
- Talk with them about their feelings and drug cravings.
- Be understanding if they relapse, and help them get back into

treatment quickly.

NEXT: [Where can someone find treatment and recovery resources?](#)

# Where can someone find treatment and recovery resources?

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If you or someone you know has a drug problem, you should try to find medical treatment. You can call this toll-free number at any time for drug and counseling treatment near you: **1-800-662-HELP (4357)**.

These websites will help you find treatment and counseling near you:

- [SAHMSA's Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](#)
- [SAHMSA's State Agencies webpage](#)

Support groups also help while you're in treatment:

- [Alcoholics Anonymous](#) (AA)—for people with alcohol addiction
- [Narcotics Anonymous](#) (NA)—for people with other drug addictions

It can be hard to have a family member or friend with a drug addiction. Sometimes it's helpful to talk with other people who also have a loved one with a drug addiction. Those support groups are:

- [Al-Anon](#)
- [Alateen](#)

For information and help to quit smoking:

- In your state: [smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov) 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669)
- From anywhere: [National Cancer Institute](#) 1-877-44U-QUIT (1-877-448-7848)

For help if you or a loved one feels sad, hopeless, or suicidal:

- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)
- 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)