

Easy-to-Read Drug Facts

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Treatment and Recovery

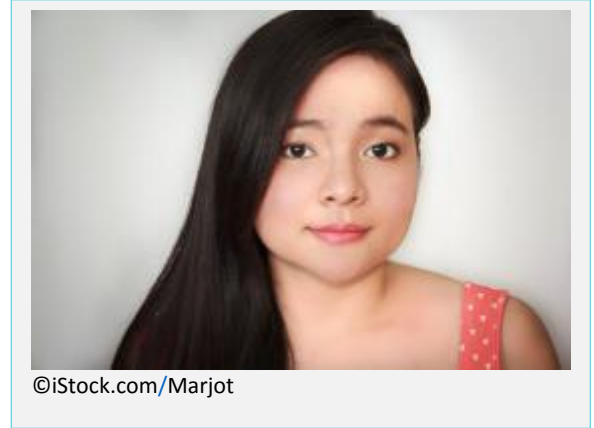
What Is Treatment?

Treatment can help people stop using drugs. Treatment can include counseling, medicine, or both. It can help people to fight the urges to use drugs again, and it can help them regain control in their lives.

People start taking drugs for different reasons. Sometimes they may start as a way to fit in socially. Or they may have problems in their lives, such as family trouble, money trouble, or problems at work, and they don't 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 treatment needs to work with all areas of your life—your relationships, your work, the way you have fun, and how you deal with problems.

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



Why Does a Person Need Treatment?

Most people who are addicted can't stop using drugs just because they want to. They won't feel okay until their bodies and brains stop feeling a need for the drug. Sometimes medicines can make it easier to stop using the drug without feeling sick.

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

People with addictions also need to change how they do things so they can live healthy lives again without drugs.

When they used drugs, they became so focused on getting and using drugs that:

- **They did not care for their family, their work, or their community.** People with addictions often are in a lot of trouble for breaking rules and not keeping their promises.
- **They did not look after their health.** People with addictions might not be eating or sleeping well, cleaning their teeth, or getting treated for infections. Their drug use might have caused health problems.



- **Things they used to enjoy no longer make them feel good.** When people are on drugs, they stop caring about hobbies, interests, and friends.

Talking with doctors or counselors (people trained to listen and help you solve personal problems) or other people in treatment can help.

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.

Does Drug Treatment Work?

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 and try many times, sometimes for 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.

What Are the Treatment Options?

Different types of treatment work for different people. It depends on how bad the drug problems are and what drugs the person is addicted to. It also depends on the person because each person is different. Treatment is not "one size fits all." What works for someone 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 or in clinics where the person stays for days, weeks, or months. Other treatment happens during the day at clinics and doctor's offices, and the person does not stay overnight. Medicines and counseling are both used to treat drug addiction. Medicines can help people stop using alcohol, tobacco, heroin, and some prescription pain relievers.

- Some medicines can help people feel less bad when they first quit.
- Other medicines can help people stay off these drugs.
- Some medicines help people choose not to drink. If you drink alcohol, there's a medicine that makes you throw up and feel sick.
- Other medicines make people want the drug less.
- Some medicines block the high that people get when they take the drug. That can also make it easier to quit.

There are no medicines to treat addiction to some drugs, but medicine can be used to help with uncomfortable symptoms of withdrawal. Treatment for addictions that include medicines should also include counseling when possible. Counseling can be one-on-one, in a group, and sometimes as a family.

Talking about your feelings with counselors (people trained to listen and help you solve personal problems), called *behavioral counseling*, is also an important type of treatment. It can be just between you and a counselor. Sometimes family members will join the counseling session to help solve family problems. Or you might talk with other people in treatment, in a group led by a counselor. People taking medicines benefit the most when they combine the medicine with counseling. But medicine alone can still be helpful if counseling isn't available.

Talking helps people with addictions:

- understand why they got addicted
- see how drugs changed their behavior
- learn how to deal with problems so that they don't choose to escape by getting high
- learn to avoid places, people, and situations where they might be tempted to use drugs

Counseling can be hard to do at first, but meetings become shorter and happen less often the longer the person is drug-free. Even after treatment ends, people still may need help. There are many kinds of help that people can get, such as drug-specific support groups, computer programs for counseling that doesn't take place in person, and recovery housing.

What Is Recovery?

Recovery is a process people go through to improve their health and wellness and live fulfilling lives. We say someone is "in recovery" when they overcome their addiction and choose positive changes in health, social activities, and values as part of their lifestyle.

Drug addiction makes it hard to function in daily life. It affects how you act with your family, at work, and in the community. It's hard to change so many things at once and not fall back into old habits. Recovery from addiction means you've stopped using drugs *and* learned new ways of thinking, feeling, and dealing with problems.

Recovery from addiction can be a lifelong effort. This is because drug addiction is a long-lasting complex brain disease, and quitting usually takes more than good intentions or a lot of willpower. Drugs can change the brain in ways that make quitting hard, even for those who want to. So, addiction can stay with a person for a long time, sometimes for life. It doesn't go away like a cold.

But with treatment, a person can stop using drugs and improve their health and wellness.



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What Is Relapse?

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 addiction. People will often have one or more relapses along the way because 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 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.

While relapse is a normal part of recovery, for some drugs, a relapse can be very dangerous—even deadly. If a person uses as much as they used to before quitting, they can easily overdose because their bodies are no longer used to having the same amount of drugs in their system. An [overdose](#) happens when the person uses too much of a drug and has a very bad reaction that results in 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.

How Can Friends and Family Help?

Some people want treatment so they can learn how to stop using drugs and start to regain their lives.

Other people are so deep in their addiction that they don't want to be in treatment. 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 treatment services and information.
- Offer rides to treatment and support groups.
- Remind the person 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.
- Understand if they relapse, and help them get back into treatment quickly.



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Where Can Someone Find Treatment and Recovery Resources?

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)**. Or you can visit SAHMSA's [Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](#). There's also a [State Agencies webpage \(findtreatment.samhsa.gov/locator/stateagencies\)](#) that helps you find state agencies that might have special programs for you or a loved one.

Support groups can also help keep you strong while you're in treatment:

- [Alcoholics Anonymous](#) (AA)—for people with alcohol addiction

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

For other support groups: [Self-Help, Peer Support, and Consumer Groups - Self-Help Groups \(Addiction\)](#) (from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration—SAMHSA)

Family members and friends of people with drug problems can find comfort in talking with other families in similar situations. Those support groups: [Al-Anon](#) and [Alateen](#)

For information and help to quit smoking:

In your state: [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)