

Better Health 4 You

SMART Local 36 Benefit Funds

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WELLNESS-Substance Abuse and Addiction

What Increases Your Risk?

Many people drink alcohol throughout their lives without any problems. Other people who drink alcohol have problems with it. Why do some people abuse alcohol and become dependent on it, while others don't?

Certain things make an alcohol problem more likely. These are called risk factors. Risk factors include:

- **Genes.** People with alcohol

you abuse other things, such as tobacco, illegal drugs, or prescription medicines.

- **Environment.** If you live in an area where alcohol is easy to get, people drink a lot, or heavy drinking is accepted as part of life, you are more likely to drink.
- **Friends.** Your friends may influence you to drink by directly urging you to or by drinking when you're around them.

Denial is the main symptom of drug users and alcoholics. They deny that they really have a problem.

This makes it more difficult for them to be realistic about the extent of their substance use, and to recognize that it may be a problem.

problems often have a family history of alcohol abuse and dependence.

- **Being male.** A man is 3 times more likely to develop problems with alcohol than a woman is.
- **Early use.** The younger you were when you first started drinking alcohol, the higher your risk for alcohol problems later as an adult.
- **Mental health.** If you have mental health problems, such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, or anxiety disorders, you are more likely to use alcohol.
- **Use of other substances.** You are more likely to abuse alcohol if

- **Problems with others.** You may be more likely to drink when you are having problems in your family or with friends.
- **Not having purpose or satisfaction in your life.** If you have no activities that give you a sense of purpose, you may be more likely to drink. Just because you have risk factors for alcohol problems doesn't mean you'll have a drinking problem. A person who has many risk factors won't always develop alcoholism. And a person with no risk factors can become dependent on alcohol.

How much drinking is too much?

Test Yourself!

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1. Have you ever felt like you should cut down on your drinking or drug use? **Yes No**
2. Have you ever felt irritated by criticism of your drinking and drug use? **Yes No**
3. Have you ever felt guilty about your drinking, drug use or your behavior during its use? **Yes No**
4. Do you ever take a drink or use drugs in the morning? **Yes No**

If you answered **yes to one** of these questions, the possibility that you are alcohol or drug dependent is significantly increased. This may also mean that although you are not dependent on drugs or alcohol at this time, you could become dependent if your pattern of abuse continues.

If you answered **yes to two** of these questions, it is very likely that you are dependent on drugs or alcohol.

If you answered **yes to three or four** of these questions, there is a greater than 95 percent chance that you are dependent on drugs or alcohol. Please seek assistance for your drug or alcohol problem immediately.



Alcohol is part of many people's lives and may have a place in cultural and family traditions. It can sometimes be hard to know when you begin to drink too much.

You are at risk of drinking too much and should talk to your doctor if you are:

- A woman who has more than 3 drinks at one time or more than 7 drinks a week. A standard drink is 1 can of beer, 1 glass of wine, or 1 mixed drink.
- A man who has more than 4 drinks at one time or more than 14 drinks a week.



What are some signs of alcohol abuse or dependence?

Certain behaviors may mean that you're having trouble with alcohol. These include:

- Drinking in the morning, often being drunk for long periods of time, or drinking alone.
- Changing what you drink, such as switching from beer to wine because you think it will help you drink less or keep you from getting drunk.
- Feeling guilty after drinking.
- Making excuses for your drinking or doing things to hide your drinking, such as buying alcohol at different stores.
- Not remembering what you did while you were drinking (blackouts).
- Worrying that you won't get enough alcohol for an evening or weekend.

What are Opiates?

Opiates are a group of drugs that are used for treating pain. They are derived from opium which

comes from the poppy plant. Opiates go by a variety of names including opiates, opioids, and narcotics. The term opiates is sometimes used for close relatives of opium such as codeine, morphine and heroin, while the term opioids is used for the entire class of drugs including synthetic opiates such as Oxycontin. But the most commonly used term is opiates.

List of Common Opiates in Increasing Strength

These are some of the common opiates and their generic names. They are listed in order of increasing strength.

- Codeine
- Vicodin, Hycodan (hydrocodone)
- MS Contin, Kadian (morphine)
- Oxycontin, Percocet (oxycodone)
- Dilaudid (hydromorphone)
- Duragesic (Fentanyl)

Opiate Addiction

Opiates produce a sense of wellbeing or euphoria that can be addictive to some people. Opiates are legitimately used for treating pain. When used for pain relief, many people develop tolerance, meaning they need more and more to get the same effect. Some people go on to develop an addiction to opiates. They begin to obsessively think about getting more opiates and in some cases engage in illegal activities such as double doctoring.

Opiate Withdrawal

Opiate withdrawal can be extremely uncomfortable. The important thing to remember is that opiate withdrawal is not life threatening if you are withdrawing only from opiates and not a combination of drugs. (Withdrawal from alcohol and some drugs such as benzodiazepines is potentially dangerous)

Opiate withdrawal symptoms include:

- Low energy, Irritability, Anxiety, Agitation, Insomnia
- Runny nose, Teary eyes
- Hot and cold sweats, Goose bumps
- Yawning
- Muscle aches and pains
- Abdominal cramping, Nausea, Vomiting, Diarrhea

Opiate withdrawal symptoms can last anywhere from one week to one month. Especially the emotional symptoms such as low energy, anxiety and insomnia can last for a few months after stopping high doses of opiates.

