

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

What Is Substance Use Disorder?

Substance use disorder (SUD) is a mental health condition that affects your brain, leading to the inability to control the use of substances including alcohol, tobacco and legal or illegal drugs.

Substances flood the brain with chemicals that stimulate the reward center and can ultimately lead to strong cravings.¹ People with SUD typically have an overwhelming desire to use the substance, an increased tolerance to the substance, and withdrawal symptoms if they stop taking the substance.

SUD can have a significant negative impact on your health, productivity, relationships and overall quality of life.

What Are the Symptoms of Substance Use Disorder?

- Tolerance to or need for increased amounts of the drug to get an effect.
- Experiencing withdrawal symptoms when not using or trying to cut down the use of the substance.

- Spending significant time to obtain, use and recover from the effects of using drugs.
- Withdrawal from social and recreational activities.
- Continued use of the drug even though you are aware of the physical, psychological and family or social problems that are caused by your ongoing drug use.

How Common Is Substance Use Disorder?

SUDs are treatable, chronic diseases that can affect anyone – regardless of race, gender, income level, or social class.¹

According to the 2022 National Survey of Drug Use and Health:³

- In 2022, 48.7 million people 12 years of age or older – 17.3% of the U.S. population – had a SUD, including 29.5 million people who had alcohol use disorder (AUD), 27.2 million people who had a drug use disorder (DUD), and 8 million people who had both AUD and DUD.
- The percentage of people 12 years of age or older with a SUD in 2022 was highest

among young adults aged 18 to 25 at 27.8% (9.7 million individuals), followed by adults 26 years or older at 16.6% (36.8 million individuals), and then adolescents aged 12 to 17 at 8.7% (2.2 million individuals).

- Among people 12 years of age or older who needed substance use treatment in 2022, only 24% (13.1 million people) received treatment.
- SUD and other mental health conditions can sometimes occur together. More than one in four people with a serious mental illness, such as major depression, anxiety disorders and schizophrenia, also have a substance use disorder.²

How Is Substance Used Disorder Diagnosed?

SUDs are diagnosed by a healthcare professional who specializes in alcohol and drug addictions, such as a psychologist, psychiatrist or a licensed counselor. Although there is no laboratory test available to diagnose SUD, your healthcare provider may use blood or urine tests to assess your current substance use.

To diagnose SUD, healthcare providers will typically do a physical exam and take a detailed medical history. They will also ask questions about your current and past substance use, including how long you've been using the substance, the amount you use and how often you use it.

How Is Substance Use Disorder Treated?

Effective treatments are available for SUD. Recognizing and admitting that you have a problem is the first step towards recovery. In addition, since people with SUD often have co-occurring mental health conditions, it is important to coordinate treatments.¹

Treatment for SUDs is highly individualized, and you may need different types of treatments at different times. Depending on the SUD, treatments may include:^{4,5}

- Detoxification, which is typically the first step for treating SUD and involves stopping the use of the substance. Depending on the severity of the SUD,

detoxification may be tapered to lessen the withdrawal effects and may take place either in an outpatient or inpatient setting.

- Psychotherapy to help you understand your reasons for using drugs or alcohol and the triggers. It can also help you develop higher self-esteem and learn coping skills.
- Medications that may be prescribed to help control cravings and withdrawal symptoms and prevent relapses.
- Outpatient counseling which can include psychotherapy and medication management and take place in a healthcare provider's office or, in some cases, via telehealth.
- Inpatient rehabilitation providing a supportive environment to help you recover from a SUD without any temptations or distractions. This takes place in a full-time, residential facility.
- Self-help programs – such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous – for peer support to help maintain self-control during recovery.

For more information about Substance Use Disorder:

Alcoholics Anonymous
www.aa.org

Narcotics Anonymous
www.na.org

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
www.niaaa.nih.gov

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
nida.nih.gov

SMART Recovery
smartrecovery.org/

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
www.samhsa.gov

References:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Substance Use Disorders (SUDs). Accessed at: <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/featured-topics/substance-use-disorders/index.html>
2. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration. Mental Health and Substance Use Co-Occurring Disorders. Accessed at: <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/mental-health-substance-use-co-occurring-disorders>
3. Highlights for the 2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Accessed at: <https://shorturl.at/dqruL>
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Recovery Is Possible for Everyone: Understanding Treatment of Substance Use Disorders. Accessed at: <https://shorturl.at/uAHPX>
5. American Psychiatric Association. Addiction and Substance Use Disorders: What is a Substance Use Disorder? Accessed at: <https://shorturl.at/gzFWZ>



In crisis? Call or text 988

For mental health and suicide prevention information and resources, visit the Rural Mental Health Resilience Program website at www.RuralMinds.org/resilience

or via the QR code below:



If you or someone you know is struggling with a substance use disorder, call **1-800-662-HELP (4357)** for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Helpline. It is a free and confidential treatment referral and information service for individuals and families facing mental health and/or substance use disorders, available 24/7, in both English and Spanish.