HELPING HANDS

What Is drug addiction?

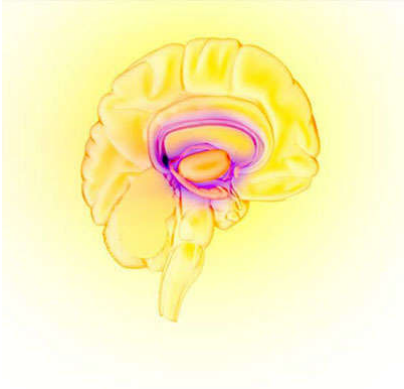
(excerpts from drugabuse.gov)

Addiction is a chronic disease characterized by drug seeking and use that is compulsive, or difficult to control, despite harmful consequences. The initial decision to take drugs is voluntary for most people, but repeated drug use can lead to brain changes that challenge an addicted person's self-control and interfere with their ability to resist intense urges to take drugs. These brain changes can be persistent, which is why drug addiction is considered a "relapsing" disease—people in recovery from drug use disorders are at increased risk for returning to drug use even after years of not taking the drug.

As with other chronic health conditions, treatment should be ongoing and should be adjusted based on how each person responds. Treatment plans need to be reviewed and modified to fit each person's changing needs.

What happens to the brain when a person takes drugs?

Most drugs affect the brain's "reward circuit," causing euphoria as well as flooding it with the chemical messenger dopamine. A properly functioning reward system motivates a person to repeat behaviors needed to thrive, such as eating and spending time with loved ones. Surges of dopamine in the reward circuit cause the reinforcement of pleasurable but unhealthy behaviors like taking drugs, leading people to repeat the behavior again and again.



As a person continues to use drugs, the brain adapts by reducing the ability of cells in the reward circuit to respond to it. This reduces the high that the person feels compared to the high they felt when first taking the drug—an effect known as tolerance. They might take more of the drug to try and achieve the same high. These brain adaptations often lead to the person becoming less and less able to derive pleasure from other things they once enjoyed, like food, sex, or social activities.

Long-term use also causes changes in other brain chemical systems and circuits as well, affecting functions that include:

- learning
- judgment
- decision-making
- stress
- memory
- behavior

Despite being aware of these harmful outcomes, many people who use drugs continue to take them, which is the nature of addiction.

No single factor can predict whether a person will become addicted to drugs. A combination of genetic, environmental, and developmental factors influences risk for addiction. The more risk factors a person has, the greater the chance that taking drugs can lead to addiction.

Your Local Employee Assistance Program representative can help if you, a family member or someone you know needs help with an addiction issue. Contact information appears on page 2.

Can drug addiction be cured or prevented?

(more excerpts from Drugabuse.com)

As with most other chronic diseases, such as diabetes, asthma, or heart disease, treatment for drug addiction generally isn't a cure. However, addiction is treatable and can be successfully managed. People who are recovering from an addiction will be at risk for relapse for years and possibly for their whole lives. Research shows that combining addiction treatment medicines with behavioral therapy ensures the best chance of success for most patients. Treatment approaches tailored to each patient's drug use patterns and any co-occurring medical, mental, and social problems can lead to continued recovery.

Drug use and addiction are preventable. Results from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) funded research have shown that prevention programs involving families, schools, communities, and the media are effective for preventing or reducing drug use and addiction. Although personal events and cultural factors affect drug use trends, when people view drug use as harmful, they tend to decrease their drug taking. Therefore, education and outreach are key in helping people understand the possible risks of drug use. Families, friends, teachers, parents, and health care providers have crucial roles in educating others about the pitfalls of drug use and preventing inappropriate drug use and subsequent addiction issues.

IAM

Peer Employee Assistance Program

The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program is the local lodge EAP peer coordinator. These dedicated men and women volunteer their personal time to assist other union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties EAP peer coordinators do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations, however, they are trained to make a basic assessment of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a more detailed evaluation. EAP peer coordinators will follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that addressed the difficulty you were experiencing.

William Winpisinger

Education and Training Center

EAP Courses

EAP I

July 28-August 2 (double Class)

EAP II

April 7-13

EAP III

June 16-21

EAP IV

October 27-31

Please contact your Local Lodge Secretary/Treasurer or Local Lodge President for information about enrolling in any EAP course