

Substance Abuse and Addiction

January - March, 2011

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Many of us are amazed and dismayed at the number of substance abuse related arrests, overdoses, and accidents we hear about in the media and in our communities.

While substance abuse is not a new phenomenon, rates of abuse of prescription drugs such as Oxycontin are alarming. Heroin addiction has increased as it's become more available, purity levels have increased, and street prices for the drug have dropped.

The AARP Magazine (Jan/Feb 2011) included a special report stating that millions of older (over 50) Americans are abusing alcohol and illegal drugs, especially cocaine, and that this trend is on the rise. Robert J. Grossman reported in his article *What to Do about Substance Abuse* (HR magazine, Vol. 55 No.11, Nov 2010) that 10-11% of working adults are substance dependent. **Most people with substance abuse problems are employed.**

Substance abuse knows no boundaries, it happens in every city and town, and among people of all colors, classes and religions. The promising news is that **substance abuse and addiction are treatable.**

Treatment isn't magic, but it works.

The first step is acknowledging the problem. The abuser is often the last to admit that it's a serious problem.

The second step is a desire and commitment to change. The person must have a strong desire to change and be willing to accept the discomfort of negative feelings, possible withdrawal symptoms, and learning new skills to cope differently with everyday stressors.

The third step is getting professional help and support by exploring options. There are several types of treatments including inpatient care, outpatient counseling, and self-help groups. There is no one size fits all approach but there is a solution for anyone who is able to take responsibility for the desired change.

Lastly, identifying and using strategies to prevent relapse. This includes creating a support system, avoiding high-risk situations, and practicing prevention strategies everyday.

How do I know if I have a problem?

Consider getting help if you:

- have a compulsive urge or craving to use to the point that it is an obsession;
- prefer your substance to the exclusion of almost everything else;
- find your use causes negative effects in your life and you keep doing it anyway;
- are using the substance to quell tension, hide from daily problems, mask emotional pain, and/or alter your mood;
- are unable to control your use once you start and you behave unpredictably;
- feel restless, anxious, angry, ill or show signs of withdrawal when you try to cut back;
- know your family is embarrassed by, ashamed of, or worried about your use and wants you to stop;
- experience memory black outs;
- lie to others about your use, hide it or try to cover up it up;
- are in trouble financially, at work or with the law because of it;
- are unable to stop, for more than a short period.

What can I do if someone in my life is in denial or is unwilling to get help?

A person with a substance abuse problem can't be forced to get help except under certain circumstances, such as an incident that results in court-ordered treatment or medical emergency. But you don't have to wait for someone to "hit rock bottom" to act. Professionals suggest that you begin by **stopping all enabling, excuses and "cover ups."** Individuals need to experience the full consequences of their use and often are protected from those consequences by well-meaning family, friends, or co-workers. There is lots of help available. Call you EAP for more information.

1.800.769.9819

Preventing Teen Cough Medicine Abuse

Some teens take extremely large doses of cough medicine to get high. The high is from the ingredient DXM (dextromethorphan). DXM is safe when used according to label directions. When taken in large amounts DXM can produce a “high” as well as dangerous side effects. Common side effects include confusion, blurred vision, slurred speech, loss of coordination, abdominal pain, vomiting, rapid heart beat, numbness of fingers and toes, hallucinations, “out of body” experiences, loss of motor control and even death. If used in combination with alcohol or other drugs side effects are increased.

Unfortunately, information about using cough medicine to get high is easily available on web sites. The most common slang terms include DEX, DXM, Robo, Skittles, Syrup, Triple-C and Tussin. Terms for using are Robo-ing, Robo-tripping and Skittling, among others.

Resource: www.StopMedicineAbuse.org

Parents should:

1. Become educated about abuse and signs to watch for. You can find information at www.drugfree.org
2. Know what children are doing on the Internet.
3. Communicate about the dangers of abusing cough medicine.
4. Keep medicines out of easy accessibility. Pay attention to the quantities in bottles or packages.
5. Monitor activities, know where your children are going, who they are spending time with and what they are doing.
6. Realize just how available drugs are to kids. Become educated and talk early with them about the dangers of substance abuse.

7. Model the behavior you would like to teach your child regarding substance use.
8. Be alert to typical signs of drug use:
 - Change in eating and sleeping patterns
 - Changes in physical appearance and hygiene
 - Declining grades
 - Loss of interest in hobbies or favorite activities
 - Hostile, uncooperative attitudes
 - Unexplained disappearance of household inventory (money, jewelry, etc.)
 - Drug paraphernalia or empty medicine containers
 - Unusual chemical or medicinal smells on the child or in his or her room.



EAP Can Help!

Your EAP is a confidential, assessment, short-term counseling and referral program for you and your family members. It is a free benefit provided to you by your organization.

1.800.769.9819 ~ TTY dial 711 for TRS then dial 800.769.9819

Online Work/Life Services

If your organization offers Online Work/Life Services, visit our 24-hour internet resource for information, advice and support on a wide variety of issues. Contact your human resources department for a company code then check our Work/Life Services at www.affiliatedeap.com

