

# Substance Addiction

## Substance abuse versus Substance addiction

Substance abuse is a choice, a voluntary act or acting from your own free will while substance addiction is an involuntary act, compulsion, habit, ritual. Substance addicts have lost their free will to decide whether to use drugs.

In the case of addiction there is a complex interaction between physiology, thoughts, feelings and behaviour. While your genetic makeup can contribute to addiction, substance use begins as a choice that, over time, gets out of control. The need to have the substance becomes the focus and it intensifies over time.

It is important to understand that the development of addiction depends on the nature of the substance, the frequency of usage, and the means of ingestion. The development of an addiction will follow a different route for each individual due to the nature of their physiological, psychological, social and genetic factors.

Addiction is a process and not an event. It develops over time in different stages.

## Stages of addiction

Stage 1 is the introductory stage, where curiosity about substances, emotional discomfort, social pressure and insecurities can lead to experimentation.

Stage 2 is the maintenance stage, where the user actively seeks the effect the substance induces, and a relationship develops between the user and the substance.

Stage 3 is the disenchantment stage, where the user makes all the necessary changes to accommodate the substance. The substance is becoming the focus in the user's life.

Stage 4 is the disaster stage, where the user develops an obsession with the substance. The abuse forms an inevitable part of the user's daily life.

## Presenting symptoms of substance addicts

- untidiness, lack of care in appearance
- disinterested in general activities
- changes in appetite
- withdrawal from social activities, friends and family
- unaccountable and unpredictable mood swings
- irrational behaviour
- pre-occupation with self, defensiveness and over reaction to criticism

- fluctuating energy levels
- memory lapses and impaired concentration
- lying, secretiveness and dishonesty
- impaired academic or work performance
- absenteeism from varsity or work
- changes in sleeping pattern

## Rehabilitation

The first step to successfully rehabilitate from substance addiction is to admit that you are a substance addict and that you need help. This is the most difficult step in the rehabilitation process.

Then seek help from a medical professional like your General Practitioner, Psychiatrist or Psychologist. There are different programmes available—inpatient and out patient.

There are support groups and aftercare groups to assist you in your recovery.

Substance addicts often relapse during the process of rehabilitation. This forms part of the recovery and informs the process by identifying factors that can assist the specific individual to be successful in their rehabilitation.

Recovery involves a commitment to address and change the factors that lead you to substance addiction.

## Consequences of substance use

- Compromise your physical health
- Damaged interpersonal relationships
- Distrust
- Accepting your status as a recovering addict
- Acquiring skills to assist you to remain actively involved in your own rehabilitation
- Repairing the damage to your academic and work profile
- Healing the factors that contributed to the initiation of your substance use
- Participating in an aftercare program for recovering substance addicts

## Emergency numbers (after hours)

- GROOTE SCHUUR HOSPITAL— CASUALTIES:  
(021) 404 4450/60
- VALKENBERG PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL:  
(021) 440 3111
- KENILWORTH CLINIC:  
(021) 763 4525
- ALCOHOL & DRUG HELPLINE  
0800 435748
- LIFE LINE  
(021) 461 1111/3

## Find us @

**Student Wellness Services**  
**28 Rhodes Avenue**  
**Mowbray**

### Telephone Numbers:

- 021 650 1017
- 021 650 1020

### Hours:

**Mon - Fri 08H30 - 16H30**

👉 **be informed**

👉 **know the dangers**

👉 **make an informed choice!!**