

# Natural Help 4...

# Drug Addiction



## What is Drug Addiction?

Drug addiction is a complex condition (more recently called **Drug Dependency**) that has been defined as a disorder that manifests in the obsessive thinking about and use of drugs. It is a condition that may be progressive and fatal if left untreated.

**Drugs work by affecting the chemicals in the brain** and inducing an artificial state of euphoria or a 'high'. But as the body gets used to the effects of the drugs, it takes more and more to achieve the same affect, thus starting a never-ending quest to attain this false happiness - with frightening consequences.

As the disease progresses, **drug users will allow relationships, jobs, studies, careers and children to fall by the wayside** as drugs become a central need in their life. People addicted to drugs may also find themselves in denial.

For addicts to continue such a destructive, self harming and damaging way of life there has to be a very strong level of denial existing to keep them from fully seeing the truth and reality of the illness. Therefore, denial exists as a survival mechanism to protect the disease. With substance abuse treatment, addiction can be treated and a better, healthier lifestyle adopted.

## Who is Most at Risk for Drug Abuse and Dependency? Is There a Cure?

Drug abuse and the development of dependency are problems that can affect anyone, from suburban mothers addicted to sleeping pills to children persuaded by peers to smoke marijuana. Teenagers and young adults are considered to be a particularly high risk group for developing drug abuse problems. This may be because these are important periods of transition and change and it is often during transitional times when people start to experiment with new things and begin to face new life stressors.

People are also at higher risk if they are **depressed, have self-esteem issues, have a family history of substance abuse or feel like they don't fit in with society**. Drug addiction is often justified and viewed as harmless fun or necessary escapism by users. However, the consequences can be devastating, long-term and even fatal.

There are a number of substance abuse treatment options if you feel that drug abuse is a problem in your life, or if you are concerned about a family member or friend. Drug addiction is often a downward spiral to destruction, but

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Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this ebook or on ANY website.

there are always outstretched hands ready and waiting should you decide to reach for help.

## What are the Most Commonly Abused Drugs?

- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- Mandrax
- Heroin
- Rohypnol
- Ecstasy
- Codeine
- Tranquilizers
- LSD
- Crystal methamphetamine (Meth)
- Speed
- Cocaine
- Appetite suppressants
- Cough mixture
- Inhalants
- Prescription pain or sleeping medication

## Diagnosing Drug Addiction

A **drug abuse problem** is usually diagnosed when the drug-user seeks help for this problem, or a concerned family member encourages an appointment with a General Practitioner, drug counselor or psychologist. If you decide to seek help, you can expect to be asked a few questions regarding your drug use and any difficulties you may be experiencing.

You may also be asked if you've ever tried to, or felt like you should stop or cut down, if you feel any guilt or feel that you may have a problem, or if you've ever taken drugs as a way of "coping" with life problems.

## What are the Symptoms of Drug Dependency and Abuse?

Some individuals who have tried drugs or use them frequently will know when infrequent drug use becomes **drug abuse** and dependence. Denial however, is very powerful and may blind many people to the fact that drugs are becoming a problem. **Drug abuse** and dependence can be recognized by the following signs:

- Feeling that you NEED the drug on a regular basis
- Ensuring that you have a constant supply of the drug
- Behaving in uncharacteristic ways in order to use, such as stealing money, lying to loved ones, or becoming aggressive when something stands between you and your next drug taking session
- Feeling helpless to deal with life's problems and stressors with out the 'help' from your drug of choice
- Repeatedly failing attempts at stopping your drug use
- Development of tolerance towards the drug
- Putting yourself and/or others in danger when under the influence, such as driving while intoxicated, or participating in other risky behaviors, including unprotected sex



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### Michele Carelse, Clinical Psychologist



All of our natural remedies are formulated by our expert team of herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths, and headed by Michele Carelse.

Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

- Deterioration in relationships, work performance or financial status
- Clashes with authority, the law or other legal problems
- Justifying use – “everyone does it”, “need it to relax”, “it’s only sleeping tablets/marijuana”

## What Causes Drug Addiction?

The questions that seem to come up time and time again when looking at **drug abuse** are: “Why can some people take drugs without ever becoming addicted to or dependant on them?”, “Why can some people stop habitual drug use, but others continue on a **life long pattern of drug abuse and addiction** despite many failed attempts to stop?” These questions have been the motivation for much research.

## Factors in the Development of Drug Dependency

Genetic factors - **Substance abuse** in general seems to run in families and studies have concluded that **addiction** has a genetic component. While **environmental factors** influence whether someone uses drugs, abuse and dependence may be largely influenced by genetics.

Poor coping and self-medication – Many people enter the world of **drug abuse** as a means of escaping unpleasant feelings such as **depression, stress or anxiety** and it becomes a way to cope with tension. Others use drugs as a form of self-medication. For example, a person suffering from social anxiety may take drugs in order to become less inhibited and less afraid of social situations.

The Highs - Different drugs have different psychological effects and create different mood states. For example Marijuana is often taken as a relaxant, where cocaine is a stimulant and is typically taken to induce a state of energy and euphoria. These feelings are pleasurable and serve as positive reinforcement - people continue to take drugs to recapture this pleasurable high.

The Lows - On the other hand, what goes up must come down. There comes a point in **drug addiction** where it takes more and more to reach these gratifying highs and so more drugs are taken. The more drugs that are taken, the harder the ‘come down’ afterwards. Some people enter **deeply painful and depressed states** and taking more drugs is often seen as the only way to relieve these unpleasant feelings.

Social and cultural factors – Many children are exposed to the idea of drugs at an early age through their parents, siblings, peers and the media. Children that have had substance abusing parents are more likely to use drugs themselves as are those whose social peer group promotes the idea of drugs. Similarly, cultural values place different emphasis on the perception of drugs.

## Help for Drug Addiction

**Substance abuse treatment** often involve a variety of different methods. For some **drug addictions**, detoxification programs and certain prescription medication may be used to combat the physical aspects of **drug withdrawal**.

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However, more often than not coping with drug dependency involves a great deal of focus on **treating psychological factors that contribute to dependency.**

## Treatments for Drug Dependency

### Drug Treatments

Certain medications can be used to assist with different aspects of the detox and treatment process. Methadone and buprenorphine are some examples of prescription medications used to help reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms. While these drugs may be suitable for some people as a part of a broader treatment plan, it is advised that you research all possible side-effects and contra-indications of these medications.

### Psychological and Educational

There are many behavioral treatments available to assist someone attempting to **stop a drug abuse problem.** Both inpatient and outpatient treatments can help the individual by promoting behavioral changes and providing a structured program for a healthy recovery. Many of these programs such as Narcotics Anonymous and Narcon have high success rates.

### Acupuncture, hypnosis and other therapies

Although these approaches were once seen as being 'alternative', many have become part of the mainstream **treatment of drug addictions** and commonly form part of the overall treatment program with great benefit.

### Natural Herbal and Homeopathic Remedies

**Drugs and drug addiction** are not new phenomena although the variety of synthetic drugs available increases on a daily basis. Addictive drugs such as opium and its derivatives have been around for centuries and have well-established treatment methods in the traditions of Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine in particular. Consequently there are a variety of **natural herbal and homeopathic remedies** that can help with the various problems associated with **drug detox and withdrawals.** Certain herbal extracts such as Dandelion and Fennel can be used to increase liver functioning for detox purposes, while others such as Passiflora and certain tissue salt compounds can help sooth anxious nerves and an agitated mind.

## Are there Other Disorders that May be Related to Drug Abuse?

There are many problems associated with [drug abuse](#). These range from social, physical and psychological problems and which vary according to drug of choice. Some of the commonly associated problems are:

- Alcoholism
- Eating Disorders
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Liver and kidney damage
- Cardiovascular problems
- Increased risk in dangerous behavior such as driving intoxicated, or contracting HIV/AIDS from unsafe sex, or needle sharing
- Harmful effects on the developing fetus in pregnant women



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## Tips for Coping with Drug Addiction

- The first step is admitting that you have a drug problem. There is usually a lot of denial, manipulation and dishonesty around an [addicts](#) desire to protect their [addiction](#) and so this step is often the hardest – but often the most important.
- The second step is to seek help. Call your family doctor or psychologist for more information on **treatment options and treatment facilities**. Groups such as Narcotics Anonymous (NA) are worth exploring and can offer you helpful advice and support. Talk to a close friend or family member so that you feel less alone in your struggle to stop using.
- Look at your life, the goals and dreams. A thorough self-evaluation can help you see how destructive your drug habit is and how it is taking you further away from your life goals.
- Deal with emotions that are hindering your recovery. **Depression, anxiety, guilt and shame** all need to be dealt with before the real healing can begin.
- Make amends for the harm you have caused and start taking responsibility for your actions.

## Tips for Concerned Parents

**Coping with [drug abuse](#) in a loved one** is something a lot of people have struggled with. It is never easy watching one's children walk down a path of self destruction, throwing their potential away, and making irrational and blind decisions which may affect the rest of their lives. For this reason, it is important to obtain your own **support and help should your child develop a drug problem**. There are many support groups such as Tough Love that are specifically aimed at parents of drug abusers. These groups can offer invaluable advice and the support that you need to help you cope with and understand your child's problem. It is also important to deal with the many feelings that come from being close to someone who is abusing substances - such as guilt, anger, depression and betrayal.

Concerned parents should always confront and discuss drug use if it is suspected. An honest and open conversation should be the first line of action before extreme measures such as blood and urine drug tests are attempted. While every parent-child relationship is different, delicate issues of trust and autonomy should always be respected.

If after this, you still feel your child has a problem, consider making an appointment with a professional and revising house rules and boundaries.

Don't hesitate to call your family doctor or psychologist if you are concerned and need more advice or contact the various support groups in your area. Below are other tips to **avoid or confront [drug abuse](#) problems** in your children:

- Cultivate an open field of communication with your children, discussing topics like drugs, abortions, sex etc without shame. Make sure there is a strict policy of honesty between you and your children and that there is mutual respect.
- Develop a close relationship with your child so that you are both able to openly discuss your thoughts and feelings. Set time aside to really get to

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- know you child and spend quality time with him or her.
- Get to know your child’s friends and interests. If you suspect drug use, monitor their activities closely and confront the issue as soon as it arises.
- Raise your child in a safe, loving, and accepting home environment.
- Talk to your children about **the dangers of drugs** and why you don’t want them to ever use them. Make sure they understand that it is not a rule that you are imposing on them as the dominant parent, but a wish for their safety and future. Help your child visualize a successful future with positive goals and dreams.
- Set a reasonable curfew for your child and try being awake when he or she returns home. If possible, arrange to fetch them from social functions, especially in the evening. Together, sit down and discuss what time is a reasonable curfew and decide on fair consequences should this curfew be broken. Remember to be flexible when the need arises so that your child learns to be honest rather than finding ways around these rules.
- If your child is going out at night, let them know that you will be available to accept a collect call should anything go wrong.
- Know the **signs of drug abuse**, and if you discover any problems, be supportive and offer your help while maintaining firm boundaries.



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## How do I Recognize Drug Abuse in My Teenager?

The following symptoms are not necessarily ‘proof’ of **drug abuse** and may be due to other problems. However, they may be seen as ‘warning signs’ which warrant further investigation. Also remember that each drug will have different signs and symptoms of use and abuse. Bearing this in mind, here are a few general signs you can look out for:

### Physical:

- Severe weight loss and/ or decreased appetite
- Red eyes
- Constricted or dilated pupils
- Runny nose or repetitive sniffing
- Depression and anxiety
- Memory and concentration impairments
- General listlessness, apathy and chronic fatigue
- Itchiness or continuous scratching

### Behavioral:

- Drop in school performance and an increase in absenteeism
- A sudden lack of interest in personal appearance and grooming
- Distinct change in behavior. This may include your child being less involved in the family or locking his or her room for the sake of “more privacy”
- Secretive behavior and frequent isolation
- Sudden increase in requests for money, or noticing that money or valuable items keep disappearing from safe places in the house
- Mood swings, aggression, or argumentative behavior
- Ignoring curfews
- Change in crowd of friends
- Loss of interest in sports, hobbies or previously enjoyed interests
- Accidents
- Excessive sleeping or seems not to need sleep (Insomnia)

## Paraphernalia:

- Packets or envelopes with strange looking white or brownish powders
- Broken bottle necks or light bulbs
- Mirrors, tinfoil, straws or blades
- Blackened teaspoons
- Syringes – needles
- Eye drops

## The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is not the only treatment option. Conventional western medicine, often called allopathic medicine, is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools and most pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine. Allopathic medicine is also sometimes called orthodox medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that, only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available – and freely used even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is ‘better’ than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that both have a role to play in the treatment program.

Natural medicine has often been frowned on by conventional doctors, especially by those who did not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce it into their course work, thereby providing doctors with a wider range of treatment options from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the body has an innate capacity to heal itself. While natural medicines are often called ‘alternative’ or ‘complimentary’ medicines, they are, in fact, a unique and independent form of medicine in their own right, well able to treat a variety of conditions. Perhaps the term ‘holistic’ medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine, which encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "... more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to support health (thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a growing perception that it is not the only answer and that, in many cases, holistic medicine can accomplish just as much, if not more – without the risk of side effects, [addiction](#) and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, natural medicines can work quickly and safely to promote healing.

In many cases, they can succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed. Despite frequent reports that they are ‘unproven’ and ‘untested’, the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a long history of usage and there is a wealth of empirical evidence to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines must be manufactured in the correct way, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market – and giving natural remedies a bad name.

Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by producing so-called ‘standardized’ extracts of herbs and offering these as superior to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be further from the truth. While ‘standardized’ extracts may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have grave disadvantages. These include an increase in side effects as the medicines produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as was seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete treatment as well as superior protection against side effects.

Whatever your choice, always choose wisely. Research what is best for you. If you have a chronic or life threatening condition, don’t make changes without first discussing them with your doctor in order that your condition may be monitored. Well informed and supportive practitioners will support patients who want to take responsibility for their own health.

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