

SUBSTANCE ADDICTION

Substance use disorder is a health condition involving the use of substances that adversely affect functions of the body and an inability to stop using substances despite harmful consequences. An addict who stops taking a substance will experience symptoms of withdrawal. In the course of time, the addict will increase the frequency of substance use and the dose of the substance.

Any person who experiences at least 3 of the following for a period of 12 months can be defined as an addict.

- Taking a higher dose of the substance to get the same effect despite the harmful physical and psychological effects one experiences.
- Intending to stop using a substance but not being able to.
- Spending a significant amount of time planning on getting, using, or recovering from the effects of a substance.
- Withdrawing from, or giving up, social interactions, professional activities, and activities of personal interest.
- Using a substance in larger amounts than intended.

THE CYCLE OF ADDICTION



COMMONLY USED ADDICTIVE SUBSTANCES

- Tobacco
- Electronic cigarettes and hookah
- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Stimulants and hallucinogens
- Prescription drugs used without a doctor's supervision
- Some adhesives, volatile substances such as thinners and lighter fluids

EFFECTS OF SUBSTANCE ADDICTION

Different addictive substances have different chemical structures. When misused or abused, they cause physical and psychological damage to the nervous system by affecting different parts of it. There is no safe way of using addictive substances. Our cells are able to recognize all foreign substances taken into the body, remember previously encountered agents, and keep them fresh in their memory. This process, which is called cellular learning, applies to everyone.

1. Substance addiction renders individuals incapable of using their mind to its full potential. It takes people away from normal life and causes them to be unable to function normally.
2. It causes nausea, vomiting, abdominal pains, constipation, diarrhea, stomach and intestinal spasms/bleeding.
3. Sustained substance misuse causes damage to all internal organs and a number of accompanying diseases.
4. It also causes poisoning and poisoning resulting in death.
5. Addictive substances affect significantly the individual's ability to adapt to the environment. The addict gradually drifts away from his/her family and friends and become socially isolated and lonely. This picture is often accompanied by severe psychological distress.

HOW CAN YOU HELP YOURSELF?

1. Be informed about how substance addiction develops.

Substance addiction begins with;

- ✓ The use of addictive drugs (illegal or prescribed) for relaxation and recreational purposes.
- ✓ The misuse of prescription medication.

2. Avoid peer pressure.

- ✓ To develop healthy friendships and relationships, avoid friends and/or family members who put pressure on you to use substances and situations in which substance use might occur.
- ✓ When offered substances, just say “No!” and walk away.
- ✓ Saying “No!” is an essential life management skill which helps us increase our capacity for self-control and boost our self-confidence. Those who lack this skill, however, will not be able to resist offers of drugs and to avoid taking a step into the *initiation* phase, which is the first stage of addiction.

3. Get psychological support.

- ✓ Psychological problems and substance misuse often coexist. It is of great importance to seek help from your nearest mental health specialist if you are struggling with anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, or similar psychological disorders. Receiving professional help for addiction will help you gain the effective coping strategies that enable you to alleviate your symptoms without using a substance.

4. Be aware of risk factors that make people more likely to get addicted to substances.

The more you become aware of the biological, environmental and physical factors that significantly influence your risk for addiction, the more likely you are to minimize them. Experts state that it is important to identify risk factors in preventing

the development of addiction or speeding up the treatment process. Individuals having a genetic predisposition for addiction are at a higher risk of developing a substance use disorder, research suggests. However, this does not mean that all individuals with a family history of addiction will inevitably develop a substance addiction, or that those without a genetic predisposition are not at risk.

5. Maintain a balanced life and encourage those around you to do likewise.

- ✓ It has been observed that individuals who cope with a high level of stress in their daily life are more likely to misuse substances. Finding or remembering stress management strategies that work for you and incorporating them into your life can help you cope more effectively with life's stressors and have a more balanced life.
- ✓ Develop goals and dreams for future. All those goals and dreams will help you focus on what you want and help you realize that substance abuse will get in the way and prevent you from achieving your goals.
- ✓ Share these tips with your friends and family to avoid substance abuse and help promote a healthier way of life free from addiction.

HOW CAN WE HELP?

Substance addiction is a treatable health condition. However, it cannot be treated easily.

Addiction, which is a chronic disease, cannot be treated by simply stopping substance use for a few days. Most addicts need long-term treatment or continuous therapy to completely recover from their addiction and reclaim their lives.

Addiction treatment and professional intervention must help the addict do the following:

1. Stop using substances,
2. Live substance-free,
3. Be productive in the family, at work and in society.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

People who use substances and need treatment, and those who want to explore their addiction treatment options, or the carers, friends and relatives of such people, can contact the substance addiction treatment centers that function as part of hospitals, or psychiatric clinics, in their area for information and treatment facilities.

Below you will find the names of two of the addiction treatment centers operating in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and their contact numbers:

- Green Crescent Counseling Center-YEDAM-: +90 392 444 7975
- Pembe Köşk Psychiatric Hospital : +90 548 883 83 07

The best way to avoid substance addiction is not to start using substances.

TRNC LAWS REGARDING SUBSTANCE USE

In the TRNC, the use and sale of substances is subject to penal sanctions.

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REFERENCES:

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- <https://www.yedam.org.tr/>
- <https://www.yesilay.org.tr/tr/>
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