

5 Facts About Substance Use Disorder

Over 20 million people struggle with alcohol or drug addiction and knowing more about the disease can help save lives.¹

Here Are 5 Facts About Substance Use Disorder

1. **SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER IS A CHRONIC DISEASE:**

Substance use disorder, also known as alcohol or drug addiction, is a medical condition that causes long lasting changes in the brain. Environment, family history, personal behaviors, or other factors may place a person who uses drugs or alcohol at higher risk for developing a substance use disorder (or SUD). SUD affects people regardless of age, ethnicity, or economic status.

2. **SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER IS NOT JUST A CHOICE:**

Frequent use of drugs or alcohol causes changes in the functioning of the brain, affecting a person's ability to control their use despite the harm they cause. This inability for a person to stop, even when they really want to, is common to substance use disorders and can be very difficult for family, friends, and others to understand.

3. **RELAPSE IS NOT FAILURE:**

Relapse is when someone returns to using alcohol or drugs after stopping for a period of time. Relapse is not a failure. Similar to other chronic diseases like diabetes or high blood pressure, successful treatment may require ongoing adjustments to create lasting behavior change.

4. **MEDICATIONS FOR ADDICTION TREATMENT CAN HELP:**

Medications for Addiction Treatment (MAT) are federally-approved medications prescribed to reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms. When used with behavior therapies, MAT can help someone stay in treatment longer.

5. **TREATMENT WORKS AND RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE:**

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health provides no-cost substance use services and treatment options that meet the specific needs of eligible Los Angeles County residents, including youth and adults, those who are homeless, involved in the criminal justice system, and pregnant and parenting women. If you or someone you know has a substance use disorder, call the Substance Abuse Service Helpline toll-free, 24/7 at 1(844) 804-7500. A team of caring professionals is available to answer your call.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICE HELPLINE

 **1.844.804.7500**

¹ <https://www.samhsa.gov/disorders/substance-use>