

**What is Substance Misuse?**

Substance misuse occurs when a person is using alcohol or other drugs to an extent that causes short or long term harm. It is dependent on how their use affects their life and those around them. Substance misuse is most commonly thought of as alcohol or drug dependence, but can also involve the short term problems caused by intoxication.

**Symptoms: Dependence syndrome**

Dependence syndrome is when a person has become physically or psychologically dependent on using a substance, often having the following experiences

* Craving to use the substance
* Difficulties in controlling how much they take, takin larger amounts than intended or using it in times that make work, home or school responsibilities difficult to fulfil
* Withdrawal symptoms when substance use is stopped, or the substance is needed to avoid withdrawal symptoms
* Tolerance for the substance, needing to use an increased amount to get the same effect
* Neglect of previously enjoyed interests due to substance use
* Continuing with substance abuse despite evidence of its harmful effects

Harmful use can also be an issue, when a person is not fully dependent on the substance but show a clear pattern of using the drug that is causing damage to their health. Such as contracting diseases from injecting drugs, or having periods of depression after heavy alcohol use.

**Alcohol,** when causing intoxication, can cause numerous problems

* Physical injuries from risky behaviour such as drunk driving
* Aggression and antisocial behaviour
* Sexual risk taking, and doing things you would not do if sober
* Suicide and self-harm, as alcohol amplifies feelings of anxiety, depression or anger
* Long term social problems, physical health problems such as liver disease or brain damage

**Treatment:**

**Medical treatments:**Brief intervention, withdrawal management, and psychological treatments such as CBT therapy, behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, and contingency management

**Finding support:** family and friends can play an important role in the recovery of a person misusing substances, encouraging the person to reach out. People are less likely so relapse if they have a strong support network. Other support groups such as Alcoholics anonymous, community and voluntary sector organizations can be supportive and prevent relapse.

**Self help strategies:** measuring your intake of drugs or alcohol an help to find trends in your misuse, and shed light on the volume of substances your taking. Keeping track of when you take substances and what environments encourage you to drink or take substances can also help in prevention of dependency

**Websites/Hotlines:**

NHS health in mind: 0300 330 5455 [www.healthmind.org.uk](http://www.healthmind.org.uk)

Samaritans: 08457 909090

Silver cloud- free online CBT if you’re feeling worried, stressed or low <https://www1.essex.ac.uk/students/health-and-wellbeing/silvercloud.aspx> .

Employee Assistance Programme, supplied by Validium: Speak to HR/ Line Manager or staff portal for more info

Addaction: 02072515860 [www.addaction.org.uk](http://www.addaction.org.uk)

Adfam – Families, drugs and alcohol: 02075537640 [www.adfam.org.uk](http://www.adfam.org.uk)

Alcoholics Anonymous: 08009177650 [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

Narcotics Anonymous UK: 03009991212 [www.ukna.org](http://www.ukna.org)