

Substance Abuse

(Alcohol, Cannabis, Opioids) (Illicit vs Licit)

When referring to **substance use**, the following information is in regards to non-prescription use of drugs, or misuse of prescribed/legal substances. This can include things such as over the counter medications, alcohol, marijuana, opioids etc., that are taken excessively or for a reason other than as directed by your medical professional. This is in addition to the use of controlled substances such as cocaine, ecstasy and other party drugs that are not legal in Canada.

Signs and Symptoms

May be physical or psychological related, as a direct result of substance use (impairment) or because of not using a substance (withdrawal). These are moderated by how much of a substance was used, which substance it was, and how long.

- Use of alcohol and/or drugs causes significant impairment, including, disability, health problems, and inability to meet responsibilities at work, school, or home.
- Dependence on a substance to function, experiencing withdrawal if substance isn't used with symptoms such as sweating, chills, irritability, nervousness, agitation, nausea, stomach pain, and body pain, among others.
- Craving, or the compulsion to use, and continued use despite consequences. Loss of control of amount or frequency of use may also indicate problematic use
- Heavy use of some drugs and substances doesn't just affect your brain, it can also damage your physical health and organs, such as the liver, kidneys and lungs.
- Sharing drug paraphernalia, such as needles or pipes, might increase risk of blood-borne infections like hepatitis C or HIV.
- Driving impaired by a drug or substance puts a person at higher risk of having an accident and getting hurt or hurting someone else.

Common Causes

Causes for problematic substance use are complex and varied, risk factors result from individual lived experiences and behaviour patterns. For example, there are both environmental and biological components to addiction (a risk factor for dependency and one form of problematic substance use).

It's estimated that 21% of Canadians will experience some degree of addiction in their lifetime, with 18% expected to experience alcohol addiction. In Ontario it is estimated that 10% of the population uses substances problematically.

Not following the instructions for use of prescription drugs as outlined by your healthcare provider can also increase the risk of developing a substance use disorder.

Self-medicating with over the counter, legal, or illegal drugs can contribute to development of a substance use disorder.

Treatment

- Counselling
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Harm Reduction + Set of resources
- Substance replacement therapy

Self - Assessment

*difficult to find an approved self-assessment tool, the majority are directed for use under a healthcare professional's supervision, another university wellness page however has set a precedent for some questions at

- <https://chw.calpoly.edu/counseling/self-assessment-do-i-have-substance-use-problem>



PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS NOT A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL