

## Substance Use Disorders

### Substance use is common in America.

In fact, more than 9% of Americans are dependent or abusing alcohol or other drugs. That's nearly 23 million Americans – 15.6 million who are dependent or abusing alcohol only; 3.8 million dependent or abusing illicit drugs only; and 3.2 million dependent or abusing both.

### Prevalence of Substance Abuse, by type

Substance	Total %
Alcohol Only	6.4
Illicit Drugs Only	1.6
Both Alcohol & Illicit Drugs	1.3

Substance use typically starts in adolescence or young adulthood, with some users going on to develop a substance use disorder.

People with mental health problems are at increased risk of addiction. Alcohol and drugs can have a calming effect leading some people to “self-medicate” in an attempt to manage symptoms of anxiety, depression or psychosis. However, substance use can cause other problems and heavy use may contribute to or exacerbate a mental health problem.

### Common symptoms include:

- Dependence on alcohol or a drug
- Substance use that leads to problems at work, school or home, or to legal problems
- Use of alcohol or a drug so heavily that it causes damage to health – either physical (e.g., hepatitis from injecting drugs) or mental (e.g., depression)

**There is no single cause of substance use disorders.** Contributing factors differ by drug, but a few common factors that increase a person's chances of developing a disorder include:

- Strong family history of substance dependence
- Continued abuse of substances by friends or family
- Availability and lack of protection against substances in the community
- Untreated developmental delays or childhood problems

While anyone can abuse and become dependent on alcohol or drugs, men are twice as likely as women to do so.

**Treatment can help people overcome a substance use problem.** Common treatments include abstinence from alcohol or drugs, prescription medications, “talk therapy” and support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous. If you or a loved one may have a substance use disorder, seek help from your community behavioral healthcare center.

Visit [www.thenationalcouncil.org](http://www.thenationalcouncil.org) to find a community behavioral health center near you.