

CONCERN[®] Services

We're More Than An EAP . . .

Our Goal is to *Help People Live Better & Help People Work Better.*

The following information from the **CONCERN LifeHub™** Service is intended to help you accomplish that goal and remind you that, as your Employee Assistance Program, we are here for you and your family. Visit us on-line at www.concernservices.com or call (513) 891-1627 / (800) 642-9794 for no-charge, confidential assistance.

Dependency, Addiction Or Abuse

In this article, you will learn what the differences are between abuse, dependency and addiction, as well as how to tell if someone you love may be abusing drugs. When describing drug abuse, dependency or addiction, alcohol is included as it is considered a drug.

What is Drug Abuse, and How is it Different Than Addiction or Dependency?

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, addiction begins with drug abuse -- when an individual consciously decides to use drugs. In general, drug abuse involves overuse of a substance, such as alcohol or higher-than-prescribed doses of medicines; the use of illegal drugs; or using a substance for something it wasn't designed, such as glue sniffing, to achieve a certain effect. Drug abuse usually involves a pattern of usage, such as binge-drinking on weekends, but not always daily abuse.

Addiction goes beyond using a lot of drugs often. Recent scientific research shows that not only do drugs interfere with normal brain functioning when they cause those powerful feelings of pleasure, but at some point they also change the way your brain actually works, which turns abuse into addiction. You cross the line between abuse and addiction when you begin to crave the substance, want to use it again, and may even begin to have unpleasant physical reactions when you don't use it. Dependence is likely if three or more of the following occur at any time in the same 12 month period:

- Substance is often taken in larger amounts or over longer period than intended
- There is a persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control the use of the substance
- A great deal of time is spent in activities necessary to obtain the substance (e.g., visiting multiple doctors or driving long distances), use of the substance (e.g., chain smoking), or recovering from its effects.
- Important social, occupational, or recreational activities are given up or reduced because of substance abuse
- Tolerance, as defined as either a need for greater amounts of the substance in order to achieve intoxication or the desired effect; or much less of an effect with continued use of the same amount of the substance.
- Withdrawal, as shown by physical symptoms; or the same or a closely related substance is taken to relieve or avoid the withdrawal symptoms

How Can I Tell if Someone is Abusing Drugs?

The signs and symptoms of drug use are different depending upon the drug or drugs used. However, there are some changes in behavior that may indicate someone you know or care about may be using drugs.

- **General change in behavior.** Someone who was previously quiet or shy becomes the life of the party, or someone who was outgoing and happy becomes quiet and withdrawn. Teenagers generally like a certain amount of privacy, but suddenly preventing you from going in to their rooms or being excessively secretive about where they are going and who their friends are can be warning signs.
- **Money problems.** A friend who suddenly starts needing to borrow money, your spouse spending or borrowing money and you don't know where it's going, or your child starts needing money all the time without adequate reasons.
- **Physical health.** Chronic sniffing, fatigue, drowsiness, and a general decline in health without other physical causes.
- **Performance at work or at school.** Absenteeism from work or school and/or a general decline in performance.
- **Appearance.** A decline in personal hygiene or grooming in adults or adolescents and a change in dressing habits in adolescents. If your teenager suddenly changes her wardrobe and grooming habits, it could be a serious sign -- especially if accompanied by a change in peer group.

None of these changes taken by themselves may mean that someone you know is using drugs. However, as a part of a pattern of behavioral changes they may be cause for concern. If you think a friend or family member is using drugs, talk to that person and encourage him to speak with a doctor, Employee Assistance Professional, or other professional who knows about addiction. There are many different opportunities for treatment of drug abuse and addiction. Admitting there may be a problem is the first step to getting better.