

SUBSTANCE ABUSE DEFINITIONS

Acid (LSD) LSD, also called "acid," is sold in the street in tablets, capsules, or even liquid form. It is clear and odorless, and is usually taken by mouth. Often LSD is added to pieces of absorbent paper divided into small decorated squares, each containing one dose. LSD is a hallucinogen and a very powerful mood-altering chemical.

Addiction is another way of saying "dependence." When a person is addicted to a drug, say for example alcohol, we refer to the condition as "alcohol dependence."

Addiction (or dependence) is a syndrome including withdrawal symptoms, tolerance, inability to quit or cut back, and other problems.

Alcohol is a legal, addictive drug that depresses the central nervous system. Driving while intoxicated is illegal in all states in the US. Even after one drink (1 oz of hard liquor, 1 beer, 1 glass of wine), driving ability is impaired. Alcohol is cumulatively poisonous, and damages many organs of the body when used excessively (including the brain, liver, and heart). Chronic, heavy use of alcohol may lead to irreversible physical and neurological damage.

Alcoholism is another way of saying "alcohol dependence." A person diagnosed with alcoholism is therefore addicted to alcohol.

Cocaine is a strong central nervous system stimulant that affects the distribution of dopamine, a chemical messenger associated with pleasure. Dopamine part of the brain's reward system and helps create the high that comes with cocaine consumption. Cocaine usually looks like a white powder used for sniffing or snorting, injecting, and smoking (in the case of free-base and crack cocaine). In addition to the desired high, cocaine may produce feelings of restlessness, irritability, and anxiety, or even mania or psychosis.

Ecstasy (MDMA) is the so-called "party drug," It has both stimulant (like cocaine) and hallucinogenic (like LSD) effects. Ecstasy is neurotoxic (poisonous to brain cells), and in high doses it causes a steep increases in body temperature leading to muscle breakdown, and possible organ failure. Side effects may last for weeks after use, and including high blood pressure, faintness, confusion, depression, sleep problems, anxiety, and paranoia.

Heroin is a very addictive drug processed from morphine, a substance extracted from the seedpod of the Asian poppy plant. Heroin produces a feeling of euphoria (a "rush") and often a warm flushing of the skin, dry mouth, and heavy feelings in the arms and legs. After the initial euphoria, the user may go

into an alternately wakeful and drowsy state. Heroin is the second most frequent cause of drug-related deaths.

Marijuana (weed, or cannabis) is one of the most common drugs of abuse in Nebraska. Marijuana looks like a dry, shredded green/brown blend of flowers, stems, seeds, and leaves of a particular hemp plant. It usually is smoked as a cigarette, pipe, or in blunts, which are cigars that have been emptied of tobacco and refilled with marijuana. The main active chemical in marijuana is THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol), which quickly passes from the lungs into the bloodstream, and on to organs throughout the body, including the brain. Some of the short-term effects of marijuana use include problems with memory and learning; bizarre or distorted perceptions; difficulty in problem solving; loss of coordination; and increased heart rate.

Methamphetamine ("meth") is made in illegal laboratories and has a high potential for abuse and dependence. It is often taken orally, snuffed, or injected. Methamphetamine hydrochloride, clear crystals resembling ice, can be inhaled by smoking, and is referred to as "ice," "crystal," and "glass." Use of methamphetamine produces a fast euphoria, and often, fast addiction. Chronic, heavy use of methamphetamine can produce a psychotic disorder which is hard to tell apart from schizophrenia (methamphetamine induced psychosis). The drug also causes increased heart rate and irreversible damage to blood vessels.

LSD (See Acid)

Over the counter drugs. Many different types of over-the-counter drugs and other substances can be abused. Just a few examples include:

- ✓ Inhalants (paint thinners, nitrous oxide, model glue, magic marker fluid, spray paints, propane, butane, etc.)
- ✓ Dramamine
- ✓ Mouthwashes
- ✓ Diet aids
- ✓ Cough and cold medications (especially those containing DXM, like Drixoral Cough Liquid Caps, Robitussin AC, Dectuss, Phenergan etc.)

Prescription drugs. Using a prescription drug in a manner other than the intended prescription constitutes drug abuse. Some of the more commonly abused prescription drugs are:

- ✓ Pain-relieving narcotics (Percodan, Codeine, Vicodin, Percocet)
- ✓ Tranquilizers and sedatives (Halcion, Xanax, Ativan, Valium,

BuSpar, Valium, Phenobarbital)

- ✓ Muscle relaxants (Soma)
- ✓ Prescription amphetamines (Ritalin, Cylert, Adderall)
- ✓ OxyContin

Substance Abuse basically means that a person's use of substances is causing problems in life ("failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home"). The substance abuser may show lapses in parenting skills, job functioning, or even legal charges (such as DUI) because of using the substance.

A person diagnosed with substance abuse is not considered to be addicted or dependent (otherwise the diagnosis would be substance dependence).

Substance Dependence is a more advanced problem, accompanied by certain changes in the way the person relates to the substance. Signs of dependence include all the signs of abuse plus some additional problems:

- ✓ Experiences withdrawal when not using
- ✓ Seems unable to stop
- ✓ Devotes a lot of time and energy to getting and using
- ✓ Needs more and more to get the same effect (tolerance)
- ✓ Gives up things that used to be important in order to use
- ✓ Compulsions or cravings to keep using

Tolerance is a word describing certain changes in the way an addict reacts to a drug. A person who develops tolerance needs more and more of the drug to get the same effect as before.

For example, a person might be able to get a "buzz" after just a couple of beers in the beginning. But as tolerance develops, the person is likely to need to drink more and more to get that buzz.