



Drug Abuse

Not everyone agrees on what counts as drug abuse. Some equate abuse with any use of illegal drugs – for instance, smoking pot or crack or injecting speed or heroin. Others talk about the misuse of legal drugs – for instance, taking someone else’s tranquilizers to get mellow, or popping “uppers” to get through a long work day.

As a matter of fact, both sides are correct. The use of marijuana, cocaine, or heroin counts as drug abuse by definition, since these substances are illegal. However, purposely taking a legal medication for the wrong reason- to get high or “stoned,” rather than to treat a medical condition – is a form of drug abuse as well.

At Risk for Dependency

People who abuse drugs run the serious risk of becoming dependent on them – in other words, needing drugs just to get through an ordinary day. This can happen with prolonged use of any drug, including marijuana.

Individuals who have become dependent on drugs continue to use drugs even if they realize on some level that their habit is creating family problems, financial problems, social problems, work problems or psychological distress.

How Can I Tell if Someone May Be Abusing Drugs?

In the early stages, it is hard to tell. Drug abuse often begins socially, as a form of recreation, and dependency may develop slowly. If you suspect that someone you care about may be abusing drugs, watch for any circumstantial evidence such as possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia. Also, stay alert for other warning signs such as:

- Significant, unexplained weight loss or weight gain
- Agitation
- Suspicion, paranoia
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Job problems or school problems
- Financial difficulties

There is help...

Fortunately, people who have developed a drug habit can get help. A few are able to kick drugs entirely by themselves, or with the aid of a self-help program. For the rest – those who can’t make it with self-help alone, a medical treatment program is a source of comprehensive therapy and support.

For anyone seeking help for a drug problem, the first step is a professional evaluation to determine how severe the problem is and what kind of treatment is apt to be most effective. If you think you, or someone you know, may have a drug problem, help is available. For more information or to make an appointment, please call Pathway Clinic at 608-643-3663.