

Substance Abuse

People often use alcohol or drugs to make themselves feel better. Addiction happens when substances become the focus of your life. All your energy and time is spent thinking about substances. You use them because you have to and you find it takes more and more of the substance to get the same effect (high) you got in the past.

Using substances has many negative effects on your mind and body. These may include:

- Your blood pressure and heart rate may increase.
- Depression, anxiety, and irritability may increase.
- Sleep problems.
- Impaired (not normal) memory and judgment.
- Impotence (not able to get an erection).
- Permanent damage to your heart, brain, liver and kidneys.
- Psychosis, delusions, and mania.
- Seizures, stroke, and heart failure.

If you think you might have a drug or alcohol problem, it is very important that you:

- Tell your doctor or nurse.
- Make a commitment to yourself to deal with the problem.
- Become informed. Read all the information you can find.
- Find support (a group, a friend, a healthcare professional, etc.).
- Understand how your medication works. Do not “self-medicate”: instead talk to your doctor.
- Find something else to take the place of the substance.
- Give yourself time. You may struggle but keep trying. Do not give up.

**For more information, call the Addictions Program, Central Intake Team:
902-424-8866 or toll free 1-866-340-6700**