



Substance Abuse

Q1. What is substance (drug) abuse?

Substance (drug) abuse is the repeated harmful use of any substance, which includes drugs and alcohol. The substances may be legal like prescription drugs or banned substances as well as some that are not even classified as drugs like correction fluid, glue and petrol. Abuse can also occur when the substance is not being used as recommended or one is taking more than the prescribed dosage.

Substance abuse results in physical, psychological and emotional harm to the user and others.



Q2. What is the difference between substance (drug) use, misuse and abuse?

To understand substance use better, we should understand the three terms that are commonly interchanged but have very different meanings:

- **Substance Use:** When a drug is taken for medical treatment as per the doctor's prescription, it is known as drug use. For example, taking cough syrup twice a day as prescribed by the doctor.
- **Substance Misuse:** When a drug is not taken according to the dose prescribed by the doctor, it is called drug misuse. For example, taking cough syrup four to five times a day in order to get well faster or self-medicating over an extended period of time.
- **Substance Abuse:** When an individual intentionally takes a drug with or without a prescription in higher amounts or frequency other than what the drug is intended to treat, it is known as drug abuse. For example, consuming cough syrup for mood altering purposes.

Q3. What are the effects of substance abuse?

Substance abuse affects people differently and has physical, psychological, social and financial consequences. It creates several complications:



- **Health Problems** - Substance abuse can lead to a range of short and long term problems like sleeplessness, change in appetite, respiratory problems, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, bloodshot eyes, poor hygiene, slurring of speech, nausea and body pain
- **Susceptibility/Vulnerability to Diseases** - People who abuse substances by sharing syringes and needles are at risk of contracting and transmitting HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B and other infections
- **Problems at School** - Absenteeism from school is observed among adolescents who abuse substances. They have low self-esteem, concentration and motivation, which leads to decreased performance at school
- **Risk Taking Behaviour** - As one gets deeper into the drug abuse cycle, it could lead to risk taking behaviours like stealing to buy drugs, driving rashly or doing other harmful activities like indulging in violence under the influence of drugs
- **Relationship Problems** - Behavioural changes may cause disturbed relations with family, relatives and friends
- **Delinquent Behaviour** - This is noticeable amongst substance abusers and can arise from stealing, lying, buying and purchasing illegal drugs etc

Q4. What is drug addiction?

Drug addiction is a disease that affects a person's brain and behaviour and leads to an inability to control the use of drugs or medication. If a person gets addicted to drugs, they cannot stop engaging in that behaviour even though it is causing psychological and physical harm.

(Source: Mayo Clinic)



Q5. Can taking any substance once lead to addiction?

Yes, taking a substance even once can lead to addiction. Experimentation with drugs lowers our inhibitions and makes our mind vulnerable to pleasure seeking behaviour. Therefore, the best way to stay away from addiction is to never experiment or try any illegal or non-prescribed drug.

Q6. Is there a legal age for drinking or smoking?

Yes, there is a legal age for drinking in India and it varies from state to state. The legal age for drinking ranges from 18 to 25 years.

For smoking, the legal age in India is 18 years and selling of cigarettes and other tobacco products is prohibited to people below that age.

Q7. My friends force me to smoke. If I do not, they make fun of me and call me names. What should I do?

Seeking approval of peers is a strong yet natural urge in adolescents. You can assertively say 'NO' by following these techniques-

1. Polite refusal
2. Give a reason
3. Be firm while saying 'NO'
4. Give a cold shoulder
5. Walk away

Q8. I do not smoke but my friend does. Can it affect me?

Yes, if your friend smokes around you, it can affect you. This is called passive smoking, and it is harmful. Passive smoking is when you breathe in second-hand smoke. You can avoid passive smoking by staying away from areas where people smoke. In India, smoking in public is banned.

Q9. Can energy drinks increase stamina and help during exam stress?

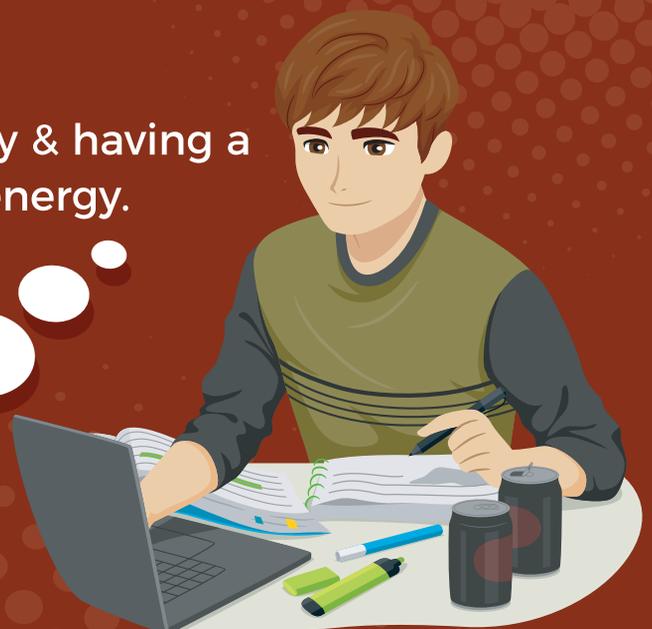
No, they do not. Energy drinks neither increase stamina nor decrease stress. Many energy drinks are popular among adolescents and young adults. Research shows that energy drinks can have serious health effects, particularly in children, adolescents, and young adults. Most energy drinks contain large amounts of caffeine, which provides a temporary energy boost. The boost is short-lived, however, it may be accompanied by other problems. For example, energy drinks that contain sugar may contribute to weight gain and too much caffeine can lead to:

- Nervousness
- Irritability
- Insomnia
- Rapid heartbeat
- Increased blood pressure

Getting adequate sleep, exercising daily & having a healthy diet can be adopted to boost energy.

(Source: Mayo Clinic)

**Energy drinks
are a not boon for the
exams.**



Q10. How can I protect myself from getting addicted?

Use creative & critical thinking life skills to assertively say “No to drugs”. Stress is a factor that makes adolescents vulnerable to substance abuse. Stress and emotions can be managed by talking with someone you trust, spending time on your hobbies, writing a diary, listening to music etc.



If substance abuse is bad then, why doesn't the government ban these products?

The government informs you of its harmful effects. It is on you to think critically and take an informed decision.

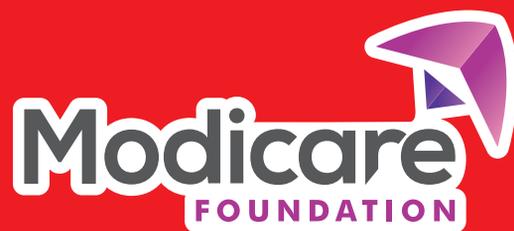


Q11. How does one get over drug addiction?

There are many organisations with professionals who conduct therapies for de-addiction. These therapies and treatments help the addicted individual come out of the vicious cycle of addiction. To come out of addiction, it is very important for the concerned person to be ready and willing to receive support and help. Support from loved ones also plays a crucial role in helping the addicted person in the process of recovery.

Q12. Are there any centres for drug de-addiction?

Yes, governments and NGOs own de-addiction centres where appropriate treatment and care is provided to the addicts. The list of the centres can be obtained from the official website of the Ministry of Women and Child Development. Apart from that, a national toll-free drug de-addiction helpline number - 1800110031 has also been provided for guidance.



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