



BlueCross BlueShield of Illinois

WELLNESS  CAN'T WAIT

## Substance Abuse: Signs and Risks



## Wellness Can't Wait

- ☒ Make a hair appointment
- ☒ Buy groceries
- ☐ **Talk to your doctor**

**Some things should be  
checked first.**

**One in 14 Americans reports experiencing a substance use disorder (SUD) at some time in their lives.** There's no single factor that leads to addiction, but increased stress can lead to increases in alcohol and substance use.



# WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU WORRY YOU MAY HAVE A PROBLEM?

## TALK WITH YOUR PRIMARY CARE DOCTOR. THEN, YOU MIGHT WANT TO SEE A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL.

SUD occurs when a person's use of drugs or alcohol results in health issues or problems in their work, school, or home life. But how do you know if your alcohol or other drug use has become a problem?

Some signs to look for:

- **Not being able to stop** drug or alcohol use
- **Needing more** of the drug or alcohol to get the same feeling
- **Having problems** at school or work
- **Changing what you do**, such as stealing to get money for drugs or alcohol
- **Having withdrawal signs** such as shaking, nausea, cramps, sweating, slurred speech or seizures when you try to stop

### Anyone can be at risk for abusing alcohol or other drugs.

But some people are more at risk, including those with a family history of addiction. Substance abuse appears to have a genetic link. People with mental health disorder like anxiety or depression are also at risk. Many use drugs or alcohol to cope.

Other signs of higher risk:

- **Peer Pressure.** Many can be pressured, especially young people, by friends or family members to use drugs.
- **Lack of family ties.** Difficult relationships with parents can lead to loneliness for a young person. That can lead to drug abuse.
- **Early use.** Using drugs or alcohol at an early age can change the brain. That makes some people more likely to keep using drugs.
- **Taking a highly addictive drug.** Some painkillers like opioids and stimulants can raise the chances that people will continue to use drugs or alcohol.

### Getting Help

What should you do if you think you may have a problem? Talk with your primary care doctor. Then, you might want to see a mental health professional. There are doctors who work in addiction medicine and addiction psychiatry. There are also licensed alcohol and drug counselors.

If you need help finding a health provider, **call the number on your Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois ID card.** We are here to help.

**In case of emergency** (overdose, trouble breathing, seizures or any other bad reaction from use of a drug) go to the nearest ER or call 911.

