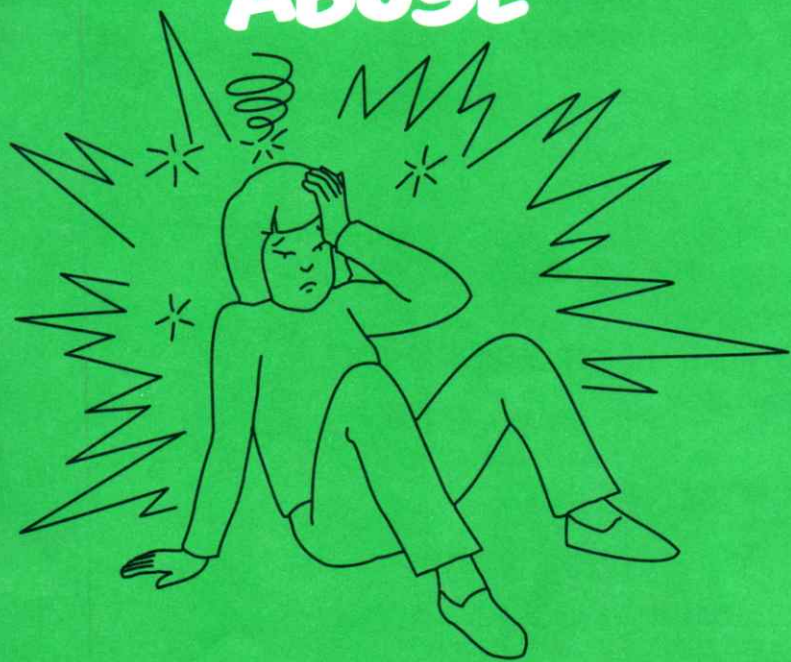


# ABOUT MULTIPLE SUBSTANCE ABUSE



# WHAT IS MULTIPLE SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

It's abuse of more than one drug, either at the same time or over a period of time.

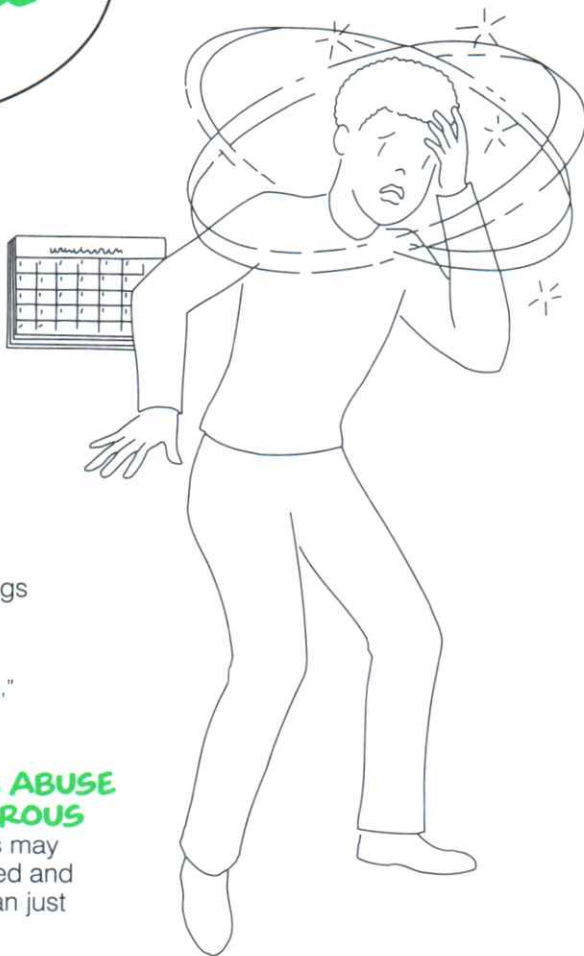
**MULTIPLE  
SUBSTANCE  
ABUSE\* MAY  
INVOLVE ANY  
COMBINATION OF:**

- alcohol
- prescription drugs
- over-the-counter (OTC) drugs
- illegal drugs.

\*Also referred to as "polydrug abuse," "dual addiction," and other terms.

**MULTIPLE SUBSTANCE ABUSE  
IS ESPECIALLY DANGEROUS**

because different substances may interact to produce unexpected and even more harmful effects than just one substance alone.



## Please read:

Talk to your health-care provider! This booklet is not a substitute for the advice of a qualified health-care provider.

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# WHY SHOULD I LEARN ABOUT MULTIPLE SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

Because it is dangerous and more common than you might think.

## MULTIPLE SUBSTANCE ABUSE AFFECTS ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE

Multiple substance abuse is a threat to anyone who:

- takes prescription or OTC drugs
- uses illegal drugs
- drinks alcohol
- has or had a problem with alcohol or other drugs.



And, many people who abuse one substance abuse at least one other, too. (This may be at the same time or over a period of time.)

Learn more...

# ABUSE OF ANY SUBSTANCE MEANS TROUBLE

Dangers include:

## DEPENDENCE

—a physical and/or psychological need to continue taking a substance, despite serious results.



## TOLERANCE

—the need to take more and more to achieve the same effect.

## A SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROBLEM MAY WORSEN

Left untreated, continued abuse may lead to:

- overdose (possibly fatal)
- health problems, including damage to the liver, brain, kidneys and other organs
- injuries (from falls or car crashes, for example)
- work, family and legal problems.



## WARNING! STREET DRUGS

Illegal drugs often include substances that can be deadly. With street drugs, the only thing the user is sure to get is trouble.

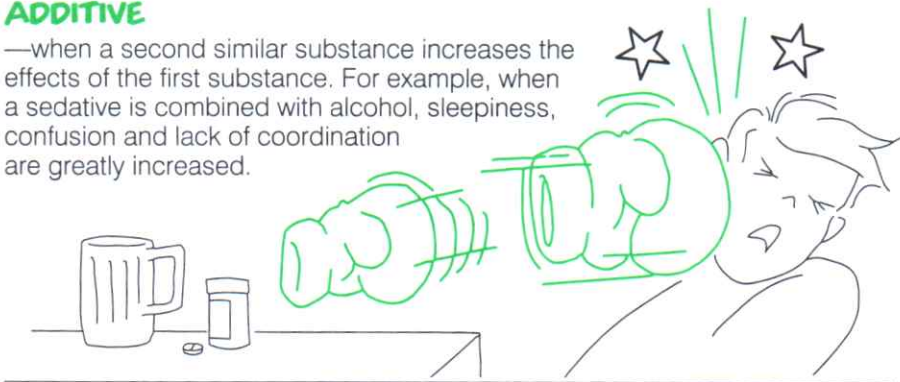


# THE DANGERS INCREASE

when more than one drug is abused. Combining substances may cause their effects to be:

## ADDITIVE

—when a second similar substance increases the effects of the first substance. For example, when a sedative is combined with alcohol, sleepiness, confusion and lack of coordination are greatly increased.



## INTERACTIVE

—when a second substance, one with different effects, modifies or lessens the effect of the first substance. For example, alcohol may have a calming effect on a cocaine user. However, this may cause the person to feel less impaired than he or she actually is.



## OTHER DANGERS

include:

- Cross-tolerance—tolerance for one substance can cause tolerance for similar substances.
- Cross-dependence—dependence on one substance can lead to dependence on related substances.



# WHAT CAUSES MULTIPLE SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

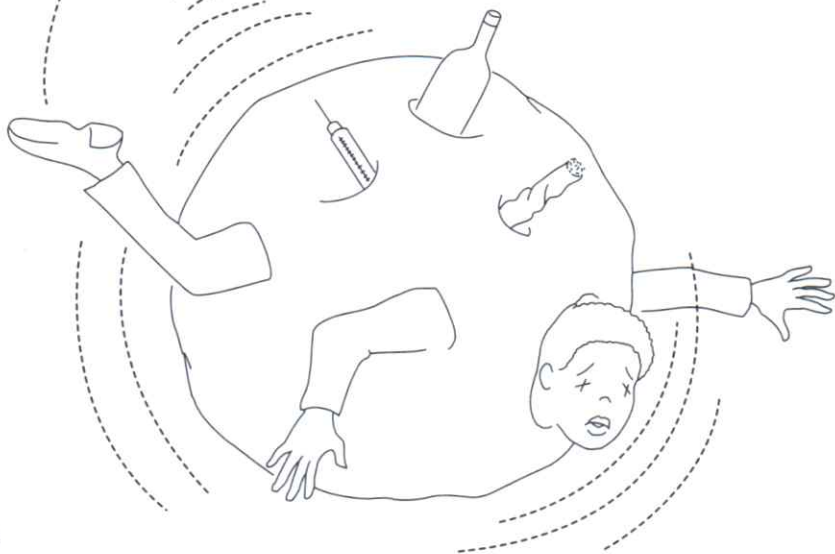
It often begins with abuse of a single substance. This may happen because of:

## A "SNOWBALL" EFFECT

Once a person begins to rely on a drug for any reason, abuse of additional substances becomes more likely.

## THE DANGERS OF CROSS-TOLERANCE AND CROSS-DEPENDENCE

People who abuse one substance are at high risk for developing dependence and tolerance for other substances.



# THE RISKS REMAIN,

even when the single-substance user tries to “kick” the habit. Here’s what can happen:

## THE MULTIPLE SUBSTANCE CYCLE

The person develops a cross-dependency for the second substance.

The person begins to use the original substance again.

Use of the other drug triggers a craving for the original substance.

The person attempts to “break” his or her dependence on a substance.

The person begins to experience withdrawal symptoms, such as vomiting, anxiety or convulsions.

The person takes another drug to prevent these symptoms.

**Individuals with any history of substance abuse should avoid using alcohol and other drugs!**

# MULTIPLE SUBSTANCE ABUSE CAN BE INTENTIONAL

For example, people may intentionally take more than one substance to:

## BALANCE THE EFFECTS

of other substances. For example, a person may use sedatives to “dull” the edginess caused by cocaine.



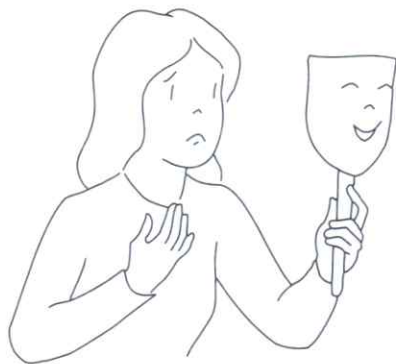
## REPLACE THEIR DRUG OF CHOICE

when that drug is unavailable, too expensive, or otherwise undesirable.



## CONTROL THEIR MOOD

on different occasions or at different times of the day. For example, an individual may use different drugs to feel alert during the day and relaxed at night.





# SOMETIMES ABUSE IS UNINTENTIONAL

People may develop a multiple substance abuse problem through carelessness or lack of knowledge. This can happen if they:

## DON'T REALIZE

that alcohol is a powerful drug. Failure to recognize the dangers of alcohol can lead to serious problems.



## AREN'T AWARE

of the many dangers of mixing substances. This includes:

- alcohol
- OTC medications
- some herbal remedies.



## BELIEVE

that drugs they get from a physician or pharmacy cannot cause any harm.



# A FEW WORDS ABOUT ALCOHOL

Alcohol is a powerful drug that can be dangerous.

## ALCOHOL CAUSES MANY PROBLEMS

because it's:

- the most commonly abused drug in our society
- the original substance of abuse in many cases
- commonly abused in combination with other substances.



## ALCOHOL IS ESPECIALLY DANGEROUS

when combined with other drugs, including:

- OTC medications (such as cold medicines)
- prescription drugs (such as antidepressants)
- illegal drugs (marijuana or cocaine, for example).

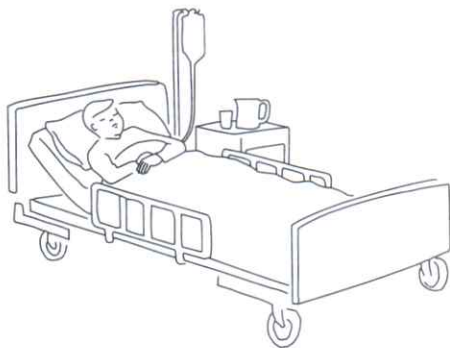
**Remember: Use of alcohol and other substances can cause multiple dependencies, tolerance—even overdose and death!**

# TREATMENT IS AVAILABLE

Depending on the care that is needed and the stage of recovery, treatment may take place through:

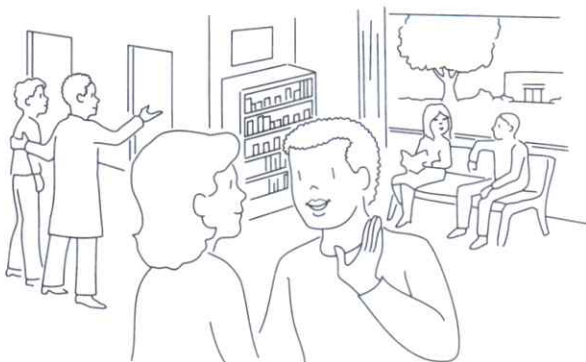
## HOSPITALIZATION

This may be needed for emergency short-term care or for detoxification. Detoxification is the medical management of physical withdrawal from a substance. It is sometimes the first step in the treatment process.



## RESIDENTIAL CARE

A group home provides important structure and support. People typically stay 6 to 12 months. These programs help make the return to a substance-free life a smoother one.



## OUTPATIENT CARE

Outpatient programs vary in settings and length. They may provide:

- behavioral therapy
- medications
- group support.

The goal of these programs is to help prevent relapse.



# THErapy AND COUNSELING

may play a major role in recovery. Group therapy, family counseling and other methods may help people in recovery to:

## ADDRESS PROBLEMS IN THEIR LIVES

To fully recover, people must deal with any emotional, psychological or social problems.

## AVOID NEW "DEPENDENCIES"

People often need help to keep from replacing a dependence on one substance with a dependence on another. People may also develop an addictive behavior instead, such as compulsive gambling.



## PREVENT RELAPSE

It's important for people in recovery to be able to identify what "triggers" their urges to use substances. They need to learn how to cope with stress and cravings. Developing new relationships and taking part in healthy activities can help. Many people find support in self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).

# MULTIPLE SUBSTANCE ABUSE CAN BE PREVENTED!

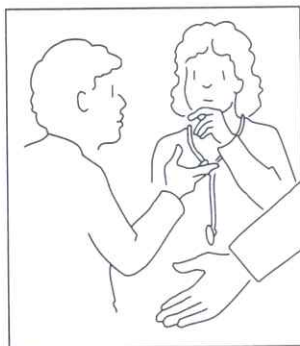
## BE HONEST

Tell all health-care providers about:

- drinking habits
- current medications
- past or present substance abuse problems.

## USE ALL MEDICATIONS CAREFULLY

Be aware that all substances, including prescription and OTC products, could cause problems—even in prescribed doses.



## FACE UP TO PROBLEMS

Using a substance improperly for any reason is inviting trouble. Using alcohol or other drugs won't solve your problems.

## GET HELP IMMEDIATELY

If you or someone you know has a substance abuse problem, get help. (See the next page.)



## WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

### For information and referral, consult:

- a hospital or health-care facility
- the local council on alcoholism
- a certified substance abuse counselor
- your employer's employee assistance program
- AA, Narcotics Anonymous and other self-help groups
- your local public health department
- your family physician
- a religious or spiritual advisor
- your phone book under "drug abuse" or "alcohol abuse," for local services and programs.

You can also call the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment's Referral Service at 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357) or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD).

Or, go online to the Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator at <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>.

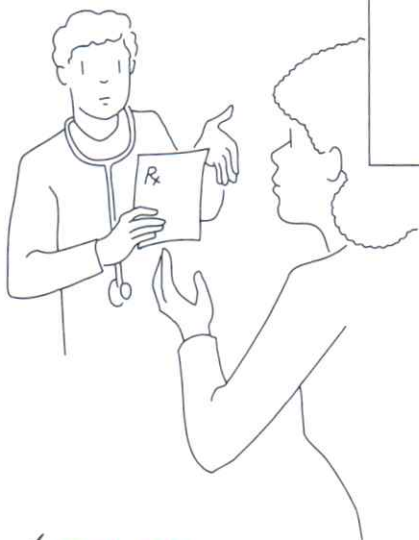


**Remember: Multiple substance abuse is a complex problem calling for specialized care. If you or someone you know has a multiple substance abuse problem, get professional help immediately!**

So—

## MULTIPLE SUBSTANCE ABUSE CAUSES MULTIPLE PROBLEMS

- ✓ **TAKE ALL MEDICATIONS**  
only as directed.



- ✓ **TELL ALL HEALTH-CARE PROVIDERS**  
about your use of alcohol and other drugs.

- ✓ **LEARN ABOUT THE DANGERS**  
of legal and illegal substances.



- ✓ **GET HELP**  
if you or someone you know has a substance abuse problem.

Protect yourself and others from the dangers of multiple substance abuse!

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