

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT ADDICTION

Myth: Addiction is a choice.

Fact: Prolonged exposure to the addictive activity alters the brain in ways that result in powerful urges and compulsions. These brain changes make it hard for an addicted individual to quit.

Myth: Addiction only happens to people with low socio-economic status, or at an older age.

Fact: Anyone can develop addiction. Signs of addiction among adolescents are often overlooked.

Myth: Someone has to hit rock bottom and voluntarily seek help before he/she can get better.

Fact: Treatment does not need to be voluntary to be effective. The sooner an addicted individual receives treatment, the better.

Myth: The child is just experimenting.

Fact: Early use of substances is a risk factor for the development of an addiction. Experimentation is often the precursor to addiction.

Myth: If treatment for addictions were effective, people wouldn't relapse.

Fact: Addiction is a chronic, relapsing disease, and relapses are part of the recovery process.

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ADDICTION IN ADOLESCENTS



**NATIONAL
ADDICTIONS**
MANAGEMENT SERVICE

What you do for the teenager will affect the next 50 to 70 years of his or her life.



'I can't tell anyone, but...

Can you help me?'

What is addiction?

Addiction is a chronic, progressive, and relapse-prone illness which can be fatal if left untreated. There are two main types of addiction: substance and behavioural.

Substance

- Drugs
- Alcohol
- Inhalants etc



Behavioural

- Gambling
- Gaming
- Sex etc



The characteristics of addiction are as follows:

- Continuation of the addictive activity despite negative consequences
- A need to increase the frequency of the activity to achieve the same desired effect
- Discontinuation or decrease in the frequency of the activity is often associated with withdrawal symptoms
- Inability to cut down or stop an activity on one’s own



Addiction in adolescents

Adolescents are considered a high-risk population for substance abuse and gaming addiction, given their heightened curiosity and impulsivity. They may also be exposed to substance abuse and unhealthy gaming habits because of media and peer influence.

Adolescents are often less able to see how the consequences of their addiction may affect their future.

Have you noticed any of the following symptoms in your child?

- Sudden deterioration in school performance
- Significant changes in personal habits
- Significant changes in behaviour or mood
- Decreased involvement in positive social activities, e.g. a game of soccer with friends
- Poor personal grooming
- Loss of appetite

If you answered ‘Yes’ to most of the above, you may wish to speak to a general practitioner or an addictions professional from NAMS to discuss your concerns.

Adolescents with untreated addictions frequently say that there is nothing wrong with them as they falsely believe that they can control their addictive activity.

Most adolescents receiving treatment for addiction are brought in for treatment by family or friends.

How can you help?

If you are an adult who is in regular contact with the child (parents, relatives, teachers, counsellors etc), you can help by:

- being actively involved in the child’s life. Lack of supervision places the adolescent at risk of engaging in risky behaviours.
- creating an environment for open and honest communication.
- knowing the warning signs and where to seek help.
- being supportive and encouraging.
- avoid getting into arguments, as these are never helpful in getting someone to consider changing.
- seeking professional help. Early evaluation and treatment is crucial for the child’s recovery.



ReLive

ReLive is the treatment programme at the National Addictions Management Service (NAMS) for adolescents aged 13–18.

Our team of trained professionals assists adolescents who suffer from substance and behavioural addictions.

Services under ReLive include:

- Assessment and treatment of addictive disorders by a multi-disciplinary team of psychiatrists, counsellors, psychologists, nurses and medical social workers
- Individual counselling sessions and family therapy
- Group-based programmes

