

A Guide for Patients and Families

# Addictions



Addiction affects a person both physically and psychologically. A person can become dependent on either substance (i.e., drugs or alcohol) or to certain activities (e.g., gambling, sex, the Internet), leading to recurrent social, interpersonal, or legal problems.



Addiction is characterised by the following:

- The person continues the addictive behaviour despite the consequences.
- The frequency or intensity of the behaviour increases over time.
- When the behaviour is stopped, the person experiences withdrawal, unpleasant feelings, and emotions.

## Signs of a possible gambling problem:

- Gambles more often.
- Gambles for longer periods of time.
- Gambles with larger amount of money.
- Incurs debts because of gambling.
- Borrows money to gamble.
- Gambles despite negative consequences, e.g., huge losses, poor job performance, relationship problems.
- Gambles to escape from emotional problems, worries or frustrations.
- Tells lies to hide/deny the gambling habit.



## Signs of a possible alcohol problem:

- Loses control over drinking.
- Feels that drinking is getting out of hand and feels the need to cut down.
- Feels annoyed when people criticise their drinking behaviour.
- Has cravings to drink in the morning, or needs alcohol to calm their nerves.
- Feels remorseful or guilty about drinking.



## Signs of a possible drug problem:

- Preoccupied with finding and consuming drugs.
- Finds excuses to continue using drugs, despite promises to quit.
- Conceals drug-taking behaviour, and is afraid of being discovered.
- Has health and sleep problems.
- Has frequent accidents and falls.
- Feels exhausted and depressed because of drug use.



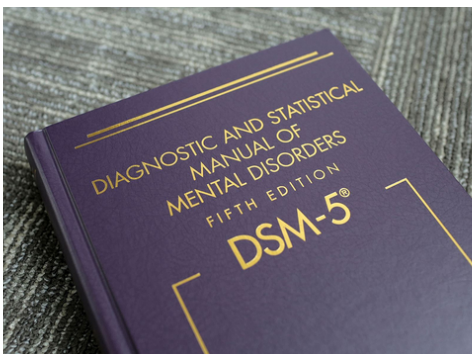
## Diagnosis

Professionals diagnose addiction through a comprehensive assessment that considers various aspects of an individual's life and behavior. This typically involves:



### Clinical Interviews

Discussions about substance use patterns, personal history, and related behaviours.



### Diagnostic Criteria

Evaluation based on established criteria for substance use disorders outlined in diagnostic manuals.



## Screening Tools

Use of standardized questionnaires or assessments to gather information about substance use and its impact.

## Observations

Professional observation of behavioral and physical signs associated with addiction.



## Collateral Information

Input from family members, friends, or other relevant sources to provide a broader perspective.

These thorough evaluations help professionals determine the presence and severity of addiction, guiding the development of an appropriate treatment plan.

## Treatment

Treatment for addiction often involves a combination of approaches tailored to individual needs. Common elements include:

- **Detoxification:** Safely managing withdrawal symptoms under medical supervision.
- **Therapy:** Behavioral therapies, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), to address underlying issues and develop coping strategies.
- **Support Groups:** Participation in mutual aid groups like Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous.

- **Medication-Assisted Treatment:** Medications to help manage cravings and reduce the risk of relapse.
- **Counseling and Support:** Individual or group counseling to address emotional and psychological aspects of addiction.
- **Lifestyle Changes:** Encouraging positive lifestyle adjustments, including stress management and healthy coping mechanisms.



Recovery is often a lifelong process, and ongoing support is crucial. Seeking help from healthcare professionals and support networks significantly contributes to successful addiction treatment.