

STARTING TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The excessive use or misuse (use in the wrong way) of substances is considered abuse. Commonly abused substances are alcohol, prescription medications, over the counter (OTC) medicines, synthetic drugs, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin. What may begin as a way to socialize at a party or feel good after a stressful week can lead to abuse. Repeated abuse of substances can lead to addiction. Fortunately, many individuals with substance abuse problems are able to cut back or quit using before moving to addiction.

BEHAVIORS THAT YOU MIGHT SEE IN SOMEONE WHO IS ABUSING SUBSTANCES

- Arriving to work or other events smelling like alcohol
- Arriving late or not at all to work or other events
- Complaining of feeling sick often after alcohol or substance use
- Binge drinking-drinking more than four or five drinks in two hours
- Building a tolerance to alcohol or other substances
- Unpaid bills or other responsibilities are not being met
- Blackouts
- Not being able to have fun while not under the influence of alcohol or substances

STRATEGIES TO AVOID SUBSTANCE MISUSE/ADDICTION

- Knowledge of the effects of alcohol and other substances on the body
- Increased awareness of how much alcohol is being used
- Use of prescription and OTC medications as directed
- Avoid the use of illegal substances
- Increased participation in low risk, stress reducing activities
- Increased education/awareness regarding low-risk vs. high-risk choices regarding substance use

STRATEGIES TO AVOID SUBSTANCE MISUSE / ADDICTION

The National Institute of Drug Addiction (NIDA)

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/nidamed-medical-health-professionals/tool-resources-your-practice/patient-materials>

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

<https://store.samhsa.gov/facet/Substances>

<https://www.samhsa.gov/prevention>

The Center for Disease Control (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/>

If you, a family member, or someone you know is abusing substances, it is important to pay attention to emotional symptoms such as anxiety and/or depression. There may be feelings of failure, hopelessness, shame or guilt that can lead to serious consequences if not addressed. Seek help at your installations' Substance Abuse Counseling Center (SACC). The SACC staff are professionals who can help you by evaluating the problem and identifying ways to address it. Visit your local MCCS website for SACC contact information.

