## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION
Preoccupation with mood-altering substances (drugs, alcohol, food) in which there is a loss of self-control and a compulsion to continue despite adverse personal and social consequences.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS
Depends on the substance of abuse. Most produce:
- A temporary pleasant mood.
- Relief from anxiety.
- False feelings of self-confidence.
- Increased sensitivity to sights and sounds (including hallucinations).
- Altered activity levels—either stupor and sleeplike states or frenzies.
- Unpleasant or painful symptoms when the abused substance is withdrawn.

### CAUSES
Substances of abuse may produce addiction or dependence. The most common substances of abuse include:
- Nicotine.
- Alcohol.
- Marijuana.
- Amphetamines; barbiturates; cocaine.
- Opiates, including codeine, heroin, methadone, morphine and opium.
- Psychedelic or hallucinogenic drugs, including PCP (“angel dust”), mescaline and LSD.
- Volatile substances, such as glue, solvents and paints that are inhaled.

### RISK INCREASES WITH
- Illness that requires prescription pain relievers or tranquilizers.
- Family history of drug abuse.
- Genetic factors. Some persons may be more susceptible to addiction.
- Excess alcohol consumption.
- Fatigue or overwork.
- Poverty.
- Psychological problems, including depression, dependency or poor self-esteem.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES
- Don’t socialize with persons who use and abuse drugs.
- Seek counseling for mental health problems, such as depression or chronic anxiety, before they lead to drug problems.
- Develop wholesome interests and leisure activities.

### EXPECTED OUTCOME
Curable with strong motivation, good medical care and support from family and friends.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS
- Sexually transmitted diseases in addicts who share needles or practice careless sexual behavior while under the influence of drugs.
- Severe infections, such as endocarditis, hepatitis or blood poisoning, from intravenous injections with non-sterile needles.
- Malnutrition.
- Accidental injury to oneself or others while in a drug-induced state.
- Loss of job or family.
- Irreversible damage to body organs.
- Death caused by overdose.

### TREATMENT

#### GENERAL MEASURES
- Admit you have a problem.
- Seek professional help.
- Be open and honest with your family and good friends, and ask their help. Avoid friends who tempt you to resume your habit.
- Join self-help groups such as Narcotics Anonymous.

#### MEDICATION
Your doctor may prescribe:
- Disulfiram (Antabuse) for alcoholism. This drug produces severe illness when alcohol is consumed.
- Naltrexone, which blocks the effect of opiates.
- Methadone for narcotic abuse. This drug is a less potent narcotic that is used to decrease the severity of physical withdrawal symptoms or allows a return to a normal life.

#### ACTIVITY
No restrictions. Exercise regularly.

#### DIET
Eat a normal, well-balanced diet that is high in protein. Vitamin supplements may be necessary if you suffer from malnutrition.

### NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF
You abuse or are addicted to drugs and want help or new, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs in treatment may produce side effects.

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Adapted from Instructions for Patients, Sixth Edition, H. Winter Griffith, M.D., W.B Saunders Company.