

# FAQ's

## What are the signs of drug abuse?

Neglect of personal hygiene, spends a lot and always in need of money, weight loss, irritated behaviour, loss of personal belongings, disturbed sleep, burnt finger tips and clothes.

## Why does a person take drugs and when do he develops a drug problem?

People just don't start taking drugs at random. It is important to understand that drug abuse is the effect rather than the problem. Drug abuse often indicates the inability to cope with the life situations.

## When should I send my near one for treatment?

You must take the call as soon as you discover he/she is using drugs. Let the professional help you overcome it, otherwise it will be too late. The sooner the problem is addressed, the less the damage and the greater the chance of recovery.

## What can happen if I don't do anything about the drug problem?

When left unaddressed, drug dependents will eventually destroy themselves and their families. They will either end up in jail, in the hospital or, worse, in the graveyard.

## How can SHAFA Program benefit my near one?

SHAFA program will help the person to address life situations not through drugs but with maturity and inner strength. Living a quality lifestyle where being drug free is a small part of the process.

## What Is Addiction ?

A clear-cut definition of addiction is *the continued repetition of behaviours despite the acknowledgement of their adverse consequences*. Addiction exerts a long-lasting and powerful influence upon the individual it consumes, to the point where they lose total control over the day-to-day management of their life.

The World Health Organization classes substance addiction as a **progressive, incurable and fatal disease**. Addiction is not a 'weak and lazy personality' or a behaviour flaw. It is a serious disease which affects all areas of a person's life.

When we say addiction is **progressive**, this means the severity of the disease increases with time. The consequences only ever become worse, never better. Addiction is also **incurable**. This means that there is no cure as yet discovered by medical science to permanently rid the individual of the disease and stop its re-occurrence. It can only be arrested on a one-day-at-a-time basis. Addiction is

**fatal.** It is a killer disease. Whether it is due to the physical effects of the substance on the body or the behaviours and actions caused by the substance, an addict will eventually die a lonely, painful and premature death. The only treatment for addiction is **TOTAL ABSTINENCE FROM THE SUBSTANCE.**

### Who Does Addiction Affect ?

Addiction is a disease which can attack and consume anyone and everyone – regardless of their age, gender, colour, caste, creed, religion, family upbringing, background, level of education, field of work etc.

Quite simply put, addiction will affect anyone who in their minds has established a connection between consuming the substance and receiving a positive sensation from it. It can affect school and college students. In India, research evidence has shown that people as young as 13 and 14 become addicts, despite potentially coming from affluent, religious and respectable families. The younger the person becomes an addict, the more severe the addiction period will be. Addiction also affects college students and graduates with promising careers and futures ahead of them. Addiction will also affect high-standing, respected members of society who earn comfortable salaries like doctors, surgeons, lawyers, engineers, professors, CEO's, pilots etc. Addiction also hits the average householder. Many house-wives and house-husbands use drugs or alcohol in order to cope with the boredom and mundane nature of their daily routine. Comprehensive studies have noted that almost 75% of Indian households contain at least one heavy substance user.

It is also vital to know that the addict's emotional growth is permanently stunted in active addiction. The biological age at which they begin to addictively take their substance is the emotional age they will be stuck at (unless they seek treatment). For example if a 16 year old forms an addiction to smoking heroin, when they turn 25 years old, they can only view, understand and respond to the world as they did when they were 16. This is an alarming reality of addiction.

In India it is estimated that 6.25 crore people are addicted to substances. Worldwide between 160-250 million people have some form of substance addiction (of varying intensity levels), as of 2010 according to the World Health Organization.

### Why Do People Become Addicted?

There are many theories exploring why people become addicted to substances. We will focus on three areas; **biological reasons, environmental reasons and psychological reasons.**

First, we will explore the **biological** reasons to addiction. Medical and psychological testing shows that people can genetically inherit addiction through gene malformation. This subsequently causes neurological imbalances with mood regulation receptors in the brain. People suffering from this problem have a higher propensity to turn to external influences like drugs and alcohol in order to feel good. Women who use drugs during their pregnancy pass the effects into their foetus through the umbilical cord. The child is born experiencing the withdrawal effects of the drug – this is notably apparent in heroin and alcohol-addicted mothers.

There is then the **environmental** viewpoint. This argues that an individual becomes an addict due to the influence of the environment around him. Children and teenagers often face peer-pressure at

school which leads them to abuse substances to look mature and “cool” in an attempt to form friendships. As a person progresses into adulthood, they may face peer-relation problems in the workplace or family discordance in the household. This may lead the individual to take alcohol or drugs to diminish the severity of their problems. The media is also a powerful influence as to why people become addicts. With alcohol and drug use freely depicted on mass media platforms such as TV or the internet etc. Young, ignorant and impressionable minds view pictures of shamelessly intoxicated celebrities. Due to this, they are dangerously led under the delusion that if they use substances, perhaps they will become like those “megastars”.

The last viewpoint is the **psychological** approach to understanding addiction. People of all age groups experiencing emotional problems such as anxiety, confusion, boredom, depression, fear and anger turn to substances as an effective and reliable remedy to regulate their sense of well-being. Since the consumption of substances releases dopamine, serotonin and endorphins (pleasure giving chemicals) from the brain into the body, the individual they have successfully found a long-lasting solution to their psychological troubles. This repeated use of a chemical-fix pushes the individual deeper into their substance addiction.

There is no singular reason to explain why people become addicted. All we know is that there are innumerable contributing factors which affect people on different levels.

### When Does Addiction Occur?

Addiction is not an overnight process. By no means does any man or woman wake up one morning and declare to themselves “Today I become an addict and will live the rest of my life as a slave to my substance”. It is a slow and subtle procedure. Research has shown that there are **three stages** in progressive addiction. It can vary from months to years for substance use to manifest as addiction.

**The early phase** involves the individual slowly increasing the dose of the drug. The individual begins to reduce their time and money spent on non-substance based activities. They also find reasons and rationalisations to use drugs and alcohol e.g. “it cures my body pain” etc.

The addict then progresses into **the middle phase**. His tolerance to the drug increases dramatically. A regular habit develops wherein the individual uses the drug in order to ensure their sense of well-being. Problems at school/college/work become apparent since a decline in performance occurs. Their family relationship becomes strained; the individual neglects their domestic duties and responsibilities. The individual’s standards of personal hygiene begin to deteriorate. Poor grooming and poor eating habits become apparent. They become more irritable, withdrawn and secretive. The individual increasingly becomes more negative and cynical about the world around them.

Addiction’s final stage is **the advanced stage**. The person’s substance use becomes daily and continuous. From the moment their eyes open in the morning, the craving and obsession for the substance immediately occurs. The individual loses all control over the substance and experiences increasingly less pleasure from using it but continues to use it to remove the withdrawal symptoms. The family make plans to remove the addict from the household or may have already done so. Social relationships become non-existent and companionship is limited exclusively to other substance users. The individual may develop mental illnesses and face premature death due to a poor health condition.

## How Does Addiction Affect An Individual?

Addiction viciously corrodes an individual's life on multi-dimensional levels. It is a disease which destroys a person physically, psychologically, socially and spiritually.

At a **physical level**, addiction impairs and eventually destroys the body's ability to function properly. Substance abuse affects all major organs and systems in the body to a varying degree. The brain literally loses its ability to function properly; it fails to successfully store and process information. The different areas of the brain which control speech, gait and memory fail to work properly. The cardiovascular system is affected; an irregular heartbeat occurs which can lead to heart-attacks and potentially, immediate death. The immune system becomes severely weakened through drug use.

On a **psychological level**, substance addiction impedes the individual's ability to accurately and rationally view themselves and the environment around them. An addict eventually becomes delusional and is only able to live in their own fantasies. Prolonged and heavy addiction causes long-term psychiatric illnesses such as psychosis, hallucinations, bi-polar syndrome and schizophrenia. Once this level of mental dysfunction has been reached, there is little chance of that person's return to sanity.

On a **social level**, addiction has ravaging effects on an individual's education/work, friendships and family life. What were once strong, meaningful, productive, and positive relationships dissolve into nothingness. The individual develops hatred, bitterness and resentment towards those he had a prior relationship with. Their relationships weaken as the addict embarks on lying, cheating and stealing from people around him/her. The addict also begins to encounter progressive trouble with the law. An increase in time spent in police stations, courts and jails occurs.

The last dimension addiction destroys is an individual's **spirituality**. Due to the immoral, shameless, unethical and sinful actions an addict displays (either while intoxicated or due to the behaviours preceding intoxication) the individual loses total interest and discipline in leading a moral and ethically upright life. He/she feels she is alive simply to feel a physical "high" and solely exists to feel bodily pleasure. Due to the individual's hedonistic beliefs, they completely forget about a Power greater than themselves. Their addiction has falsely led them to believe they are superior to God Himself. The individual's ethical deterioration is so profound; they lose all ability to discern morality from sin.