

# ADDICTION

## Factsheet

---

**Addiction can be defined as not having control over doing, taking or using something to the point where it could be harmful. Addiction of any kind can seriously affect the welfare of an individual, and their day to day living. It can damage relationships and impact those close to the person.**

### Types of addiction

#### Gambling

It is estimated there are nearly 1.4 million problem gamblers in the UK. The internet has made gambling more accessible. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is often offered as treatment.

#### Drugs

It is not only illegal substances that can be associated with drug dependency, but also prescription and over the counter medication. Individuals with a dependency on drugs are entitled to NHS care and should speak to their GP. They may be offered drug counselling as part of their treatment plan, or be referred to more specialist services.

#### Alcohol

Alcoholism is the most serious form of problem drinking. There are other forms of alcohol dependence such as 'binge drinking' where a person will drink heavily for a period of a few weeks and then abstain before starting again. Individuals can speak to their GP or a specialist organisation for help and support.

#### Other

There are many other types of addiction including but not limited to smoking, solvents, work, sex, internet surfing and shopping.

### Spotting the signs

Signs of addiction can include:

- Mood swings, anxiety or depression
- Outbursts of temper
- Paranoia or overreaction to criticism
- Secretive or dishonest behaviour

- Defensiveness
- Changes in work attendance or performance
- Withdrawal from responsibility
- Frequent small accidents or mistakes
- Sudden changes in weight
- Lack of concern over appearance
- Neglected property or possessions
- Tiredness or difficulty in sleeping

## Offering support

It may feel difficult to support someone with an addiction but there are things you can do:

- Listen to them if they want to talk about their experiences or how they feel.
- Encourage the individual to seek help and offer reassurance.
- Help them find out what support and services are available.
- Go to appointments with them, if they would like you to. This may especially help for their first visit.
- Support them with sticking to their treatment plan and meeting their targets.

## Find out more

The following list is a small selection of the wide range of organisations which publish information on addiction. *The MCF does not endorse or recommend any of the organisations listed.*

### Alcohol

- **Drinkaware**  
An independent charity working to reduce alcohol misuse and harm in the UK. It assists people to make better choices about drinking.  
[www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)
- **Alcoholic Anonymous**  
Brings together individuals who want to stop abusing alcohol and remain sober.  
[www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)
- **Adfam**  
A national charity working to improve life for families affected by drugs and alcohol.  
[www.adfam.org.uk](http://www.adfam.org.uk)

## Drugs

- **Frank**  
Information and advice for drug users, parents and carers.  
[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)
- **Release**  
Free, confidential advice on drugs law for drug users and their families.  
[www.release.org.uk](http://www.release.org.uk)

## Gambling

- **Gamblers Anonymous**  
Brings together people who support each other to solve their problem gambling.  
[www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk](http://www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk)
- **Gam Care**  
Information, advice, support and free counselling for the prevention and treatment of problem gambling.  
[www.gamcare.org.uk](http://www.gamcare.org.uk)

## Other information

### Masonic Charitable Foundation

The MCF provides grants and support for Freemasons and their family members. A wide range of help is available for daily living costs; health, care and wellbeing; and education-related costs for children and young people.

Call 0800 035 60 90 or visit [www.mcf.org.uk](http://www.mcf.org.uk)

### MCF Factsheets

You may also be interested in the following factsheets:

- Debt
- Government benefits
- Mental health

Visit [mcf.org.uk/resources/almoner-resources](http://mcf.org.uk/resources/almoner-resources)

Whilst every care has been taken to verify accuracy, the information in this factsheet is for guidance only.

**Last updated / reviewed: June 2023**