

ADDICTION

Factsheet

Addiction can be understood as an illness in which an individual becomes reliant or dependent on taking a substance(s) in a way which is out of control. Often people with an addiction might fail to recognize that they have a problem. Addiction to any kind of substance can be damaging to health long term and even result in death. In addition, these kind of problems can also damage relationships, so it is important to seek help and guidance if someone has been affected by an addiction.

Types of addiction

Gambling

It is estimated there are nearly 1.4 million problem gamblers in the UK. Problem gambling is when the behavior interferes with normal life and becomes compulsive irrespective of the adverse affects and impacts, including financial loses or relationship consequences. The internet has made gambling more accessible. There are a number of support groups and self help options available. 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 0300 12 31 110**
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
- **Alcoholic Anonymous 0800 91 77 650**
Brings together individuals who want to stop abusing alcohol and remain sober.
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk
- **Adfam 0744 21 37 421**
A national charity working to improve life for families affected by drugs and alcohol.
www.adfam.org.uk

Drugs

- **Frank 0300 12 36 600**
Information and advice for drug users, parents and carers.
www.talktofrank.com
- **Release 0207 32 42 989**
Free, confidential advice on drugs law for drug users and their families.
www.release.org.uk

Gambling

- **Gamblers Anonymous 0330 09 40 322**
Brings together people who support each other to solve their problem gambling.
www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk
- **Gam Care 0808 80 20 133**
Information, advice, support and free counselling for the prevention and treatment of problem gambling.
www.gamcare.org.uk
- **Gamble Aware 0808 80 20 133**
Advice helpline and information on support gambling.
www.gambleaware.org

General

- **NHS 0207 32 42 989**
Where to find support for families affected by addiction
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/addiction-support/advice-for-the-families-of-drug-users/>
- **Recovery 0203 55 30 324**
Confidential information and guidance on tackling addiction
<https://www.recovery.org.uk/>

- **We Are With You**

Get free, confidential support with alcohol, drugs or mental health from local services or online

<https://www.wearewithyou.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

MCF Factsheets

You may also be interested in the following factsheets:

- **Debt**
- **Government benefits**
- **Mental health**

Scan the QR code below or visit mcf.org.uk/resources/almoner-resources



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

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