

SUBSTANCE ABUSE: DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM?

The following information on alcohol and substance abuse was provided by CIGNA Corporation in connection with its recognition of August as National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month.

The abuse of alcohol or drugs can have a serious impact on a range of personal issues, including the health and well-being of those who drink or use drugs. Family and friends can also be affected by your abuse of alcohol or drugs.

Alcoholism, or "alcohol dependence," and drug abuse, or "drug dependence," are diseases that include four symptoms:

Craving: A strong need, or compulsion, to drink or use drugs.

Loss of control: The inability to limit your drinking or drug use on any given occasion.

Physical dependence: Withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, shakiness, and anxiety, can occur when alcohol use is stopped after a period of heavy drinking or drug use is stopped after a long time of use.

Tolerance: The need to use greater amounts of alcohol or drugs in order to "get high."

Warning Signs of Alcohol or Drug Abuse:

Do you drink alone or use drugs or alcohol when you feel angry?

Do you drink alone or use drugs or alcohol when you feel sad?

Does your drinking or drug use ever make you late for work?

Does your drinking or drug use worry your family?

Do you ever drink or use drugs after telling yourself you won't?

Do you ever forget what you did while drinking or using drugs?

Do you get headaches or have a hangover after drinking?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, you may have a problem with drugs or alcohol and you should seek a professional assessment by contacting a therapist.

What is alcohol and drug abuse treatment?

While some people are able to get better without help, most people are able to stop drinking and abusing drugs and rebuild their lives.

Treatment may include:

- Going to drug counseling and group meetings
- Avoiding the people, places, and situations that get you into trouble
- Working with your counselor to show that you are really trying to change your life
- Working with your doctor to see if anti-craving medications can help
- Learning things like anger management and job skills so you have more choices in life