

Treatment Approaches for Drug Addiction



- Addiction is a disease that affects both the brain and behavior.
- Treatment should include both medical and mental health services as needed.
- Patients can receive treatment in many different settings with various approaches.
- Medication can be used to manage withdrawal symptoms, prevent relapse and treat co-occurring conditions.

What Is Drug Addiction?

Drug addiction is a chronic disease characterized by compulsive drug seeking, continued use despite harmful consequences, and long-lasting changes in the brain. Addiction affects parts of the brain involved in reward and motivation, learning and memory, and control over behavior. These changes in the brain can lead to the harmful behaviors seen in people who use drugs.

Principles Of Effective Treatment

- Addiction is a complex but treatable disease that affects brain function and behavior.
- No single treatment is right for everyone.
- People need to have quick access to treatment.
- Effective treatment addresses all patient needs, not just drug use.
- Staying in treatment long enough is critical.
- Counseling and other behavioral therapies are the most commonly used forms of treatment.
- Medications are often an important part of treatment, especially when combined with behavioral therapies.
- Treatment plans must be reviewed often and modified to fit the patient's changing needs.
- Treatment should address other possible mental disorders.
- Medically assisted detoxification is only the first stage of treatment.
- Treatment doesn't need to be voluntary to be effective.
- Drug use during treatment must be monitored continuously.
- Treatment programs should test patients for HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B and C, tuberculosis, and other infectious diseases as well as teach them about steps they can take to reduce their risk of these illnesses.

What Are Treatments For Drug Addiction?

There are many options that have been successful in treating drug addiction, including:

- Behavioral counseling
- Medication
- Evaluation and treatment for co-occurring mental health issues such as depression and anxiety
- Long-term follow-up to prevent relapse



Wheeler

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How Are Medications Used In Drug Addiction Treatment?

1. Relapse prevention: Patients can use medications to help re-establish normal brain function and decrease cravings.

- *Opioids:* Methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone are used to treat opioid addiction. Acting on the same targets in the brain as heroin and morphine, methadone and buprenorphine suppress withdrawal symptoms and relieve cravings. Naltrexone blocks the effects of opioids at their receptor sites in the brain and should be used only in patients who have already been detoxified.
- *Tobacco:* Nicotine replacement therapies have several forms, including the patch, spray, gum, and lozenges. These products are available over the counter. The FDA has approved two prescription medications for nicotine addiction: bupropion and varenicline.
- *Alcohol:* Three medications have been FDA-approved for treating alcohol addiction and a fourth, topiramate, has shown promise in clinical trials (large-scale studies with people). The three approved medications are naltrexone, acamprostate and disulfiram.

Scientists are developing other medications to treat stimulant (cocaine, methamphetamine) and cannabis (marijuana) addiction. People who use more than one drug, which is very common, need treatment for all of the substances they use.

2. Co-occurring conditions: Other medications are available to treat possible mental health conditions, such as depression or anxiety, that may be contributing to the person's addiction.

How Are Behavioral Therapies Used To Treat Drug Addiction?

Outpatient behavioral treatment includes a wide variety of programs for patients who visit a behavioral health counselor on a regular schedule. These programs typically offer forms of behavioral therapy such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, multidimensional family therapy, motivational interviewing, and motivational incentives (contingency management).

Inpatient or residential treatment can also be very effective, especially for those with more severe problems (including co-occurring disorders). Licensed residential treatment facilities offer 24-hour structured and intensive care and settings include therapeutic communities, shorter-term residential treatment, and recovery housing.

Connecticut Resources

24/7 Access Line

1-800-563-4086

(includes detox, and prescription opioid or heroin addiction treatment)

www.drugfreect.org

Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

www.ctaddictionservices.com/

(Real time bed availability)

National Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

<https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>



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