

About Drug Addiction and Opioid Dependence

Addiction¹

Addiction is a brain disease characterized by a chronic, relapsing physical and psychological dependence on a behavior or substance. Addiction may lead a person to pursue problematic habits, despite harm caused to themselves or others.

Warning Signs of Addiction

- Ignoring commitments or responsibilities
- Problems at work, school, or home
- Unexplained absences
- Appearing to have a new set of friends
- Considerable monetary fluctuations
- Changes in sleep pattern
- Lapses in concentration or memory
- Being oddly secretive about parts of personal life
- Sudden mood swings and changes in behavior
- Unusual lack of motivation
- Weight loss or changes in physical appearance
- Withdrawal from normal social contacts

Criteria to Assess Severity of Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

- Lack of control
- Desire to limit use
- Time spent procuring opioids
- Cravings for the drug of choice
- Lack of responsibility
- Problems with relationships
- Loss of interest in other activities
- Use continues despite dangerous circumstances
- Use continues despite worsened physical or psychological problems
- Increased tolerance to drug of choice

Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)²

OUD includes dependence and addiction, consisting of an overwhelming desire to use opioids, increased tolerance to them, and withdrawal symptoms when their use is stopped. The disorder is clinically defined as the repeated occurrence of at least two of the criteria below within a year of opioid use.

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition, Criteria

Six or more items on the diagnostic criteria indicate a severe condition:

- More taken than intended
- Using in dangerous settings
- Continued use leading to social and interpersonal consequences
- Cravings
- Withdrawal symptoms
- Decreased social or recreational activities
- Unable to decrease the amount used
- Excessive time to obtain or recover from opioids
- Difficulty fulfilling duties at school or work
- High Tolerance
- Continued use despite worsening health

References

- Juergens J. Understanding Drug & Alcohol Addiction. Addiction Center. Accessed December 2022. <https://www.addictioncenter.com/addiction/>
- Dvdyk AM, Jain NK, Gupta M. Opioid Use Disorder. StatPearls. Updated June 21, 2022. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK553166/>