

# Substance Use

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## What is Substance Use?

Substance use is the excessive consumption or misuse of a substance for the sake of its nontherapeutic effects on the mind or body, especially drugs or alcohol.

## Symptoms to look for:

### Possible signs of substance use

- Behavioral Changes: agitation, fits of violence or anger, paranoia or depression, apathy, forgetfulness, sudden need for money, lying
- Physical Changes: any dramatic increase or decrease in weight, poor coordination, tremors, scent of substance, insomnia or hypersomnia
- Social Changes: will withdraw from friends and family, suddenly socialize with those significantly younger or older

## Best Practices

Current research-based best practices tend to merge the biopsychosocial, theoretical perspective of addictive disorders. This includes supportive counseling, motivating client readiness for change and coping-skills training techniques. The goals of treatment are:

- To establish and maintain abstinence from the illicit use of all psychoactive drugs;
- To foster development of (non-chemical) coping and problem-solving skills;
- To stop and ultimately eliminate impulses to “self-medicate” with psychoactive drugs; and
- To enhance and sustain client motivation for change.

## Screening Tools/Resources

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### Screening Tools:

Screening for Drug Use in General Medical Settings  
(Quick Reference Guide)

Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ)

### Resources:

#### **National Institute of Drug Abuse**

[drugabuse.gov](http://drugabuse.gov)

#### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

[samhsa.gov](http://samhsa.gov)



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