

## ADDICTION AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

### ADDICTION

Addiction is a complex disease that affects the brain. When a person who is weak-willed or vulnerable is exposed to large amounts of stress, he or she consume substances or looks for methods that create a feeling of immediate relief. It can be abuse or misuse of substance like consuming alcohol or drugs; or behavioral problems such as gambling, video games, and excessive work, food, and sex. These substances or activities can alter the way we think or the way brain functions. Continued and indiscriminate use of these substances over a period of time creates addiction.

The term 'addiction' is used to describe a compulsion by an individual to engage obsessively in some specific activity. Addiction leads to harmful consequences to an individual's health, mental state and social life.

This typically happens when drugs and alcohol are misused and consumed in large quantities without the consultation of medical practitioners. They affect the central nervous system, liver, spleen, kidney and heart and the individual eventually suffers from addiction.

Addiction is a chronic disease and can relapse (come back again) after a period of time. It affects the brain's responses and motivation systems. People struggling with addiction will be unable to control their actions or make sensible decisions about their behaviour, even if the consequences are negative or dangerous.

There are several reasons for addiction, both personal and social. Some become addicts due to personal trauma or emotional disturbances. Others become addicts due to peer pressure and unregulated habits.

Addiction can be due to any of these two ways of dependence:

**Substance-related Addiction:** This includes dependence on any of the following:

- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Street drugs (illegally sold drugs that are taken for non-medicinal use. e.g. LSD, amphetamines)
- Prescription drugs (medicinal drugs that are misused. e.g. sleeping pills and pain-killers)

**Behaviour-related Addiction:** This may be due to excessive indulgence in the following activities:

- Gambling
- Eating
- the Internet
- Video Games
- Work
- Sex

## ALCOHOLISM

Alcoholism is also known as alcohol dependence. Alcoholics suffer from an uncontrollable desire to consume alcohol individuals, it starts as social drinking that eventually leads to heavier and heavier alcohol consumption, and later causes serious health and psychological problems.

### The Addiction Cycle



Ethyl alcohol (  $C_2H_5OH$  ) or ethanol, is an intoxicating ingredient found in beer, wine and liquor. Alcohol is produced by the fermentation of yeast, sugar and starch. It is a depressant that affects the central nervous system.

### Some of the symptoms of alcoholism:

Drinking alone, drinking in secret, blacking out - not being able to remember the passage time, being annoyed when not able to drink, having alcohol hidden in unlikely places, gulping drinks down in order to drink more and then feel good, needing a larger quantity of alcohol to feel its effect, feeling nausea, sweating, or even shaking when not drinking.

The problems linked to alcohol dependence are extensive and affect the person physically, psychologically and socially.

Psychologically it could cause mental illness, depression and suicidal tendencies. This could result in behavioural problems in their social life resulting in work abuse, child abuse, spouse beating, fights with neighbours and vulnerability to accidents.

**Every year, there are about 27,000 deaths all over the world because of liver cirrhosis. Alcohol-related cirrhosis leads to more death than cirrhosis due to any other cause.**

Physically it could lead to fatigue, memory loss, weakening of eye muscles, gastritis, pancreas damage, hypertension, heart failure, stroke, diabetes, cancer and liver cirrhosis.

## Liver Cirrhosis

One of the reasons for liver cirrhosis is alcoholism. It starts with inflammation of the liver. Over a period of time it leads to scarring of the liver tissue and finally cirrhosis of the liver. A healthy liver is able to regenerate most of its own cells when they become damaged. At the final stage of cirrhosis, the liver can no longer effectively replace damaged cells.

## Prevention and treatment of alcoholism

Addiction to alcohol can be prevented at an early stage by taking the following steps:

- The harmful effects of alcohol must be explained to people.
- If the addiction has developed due to being idle or by the pressure of the job, both the idleness and the nature of the job should be changed.
- Psychotherapy helps the patients in changing their lifestyle.
- By educating parents and teachers how to help the patients recover from alcoholic addiction.
- Drug therapy is also a valuable treatment. Medicines like Benzodiazepines, high dose of vitamin B and antidepressants like phenothiazines are effective in the recovery of alcoholic addiction.
- A number of voluntary organizations are financially assisting to undertake the educative work in various communities and target groups.

## SMOKING CIGARETTES

Nicotine is one of the most frequently used addictive drugs and the leading preventable cause of disease and disability and death in India. Cigarettes and tobacco in any form are illegal substance in most countries.

**EFFECT ON LUNGS :** Smoking destroys the small hairs (cilia) present in the upper respiratory tract (trachea). In normal persons these hairs protect lungs from germs, dust, smoke and other harmful chemicals which enter the lungs causing infection, cough and lung cancer. The air sacs of lungs ( alveoli) get permanently damaged causing difficulty in breathing.

## EFFECT ON THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM:

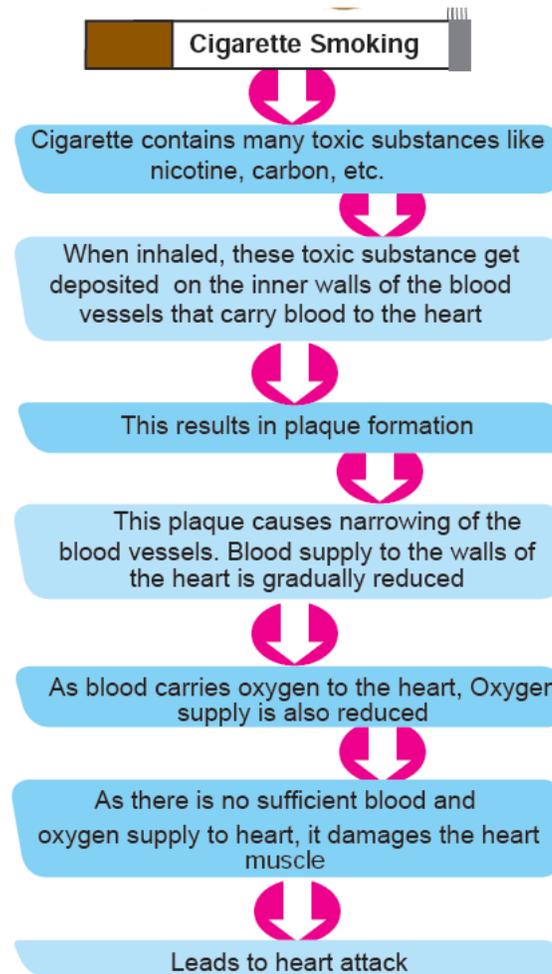
Smoking causes heart burn, delays the healing of peptic ulcer, increases risk of Crohn's diseases and formation of gall stones. It affects the liver and increases the chances of stomach cancer.

## OTHER EFFECTS OF SMOKING

**LEGS :** Smoking affects the blood vessels of the legs causing chronic pain in legs.

**EYES :** The sensitive blood vessels of the eyes are easily damaged by smoking. This causes redness of eyes and itching. Heavy smoking may lead to degeneration and loss of eye sight.

### EFFECTS OF SMOKING ON HEART



**Smoking causes diseases like heart attack, hypertension (high blood pressure), cardio – vascular diseases and finally leads to death**

**SKIN :** Due to smoking, the skin is deprived of oxygen and it loses its texture. An average smoker looks five years older than his healthy non-smoking counterparts. The skin loses its healthy glow and takes on a yellowish-grey cast. The more cigarettes one smokes, the worse the skin will look.

Wrinkles start appearing very quickly as smoking affects the elastic nature of the tissues of the skin.

**BONES :** It accelerates the process of osteoporosis.

### CANCER

Smoking causes cancer in lungs, larynx, oral cavity, pharynx, oesophagus and bladder.

Tobacco smoke contains more than 60 substances that could cause cancer. Most of the lung cancer occurs due to smoking.

## EFFECT ON THE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

Smoking reduces fertility in both men and women.

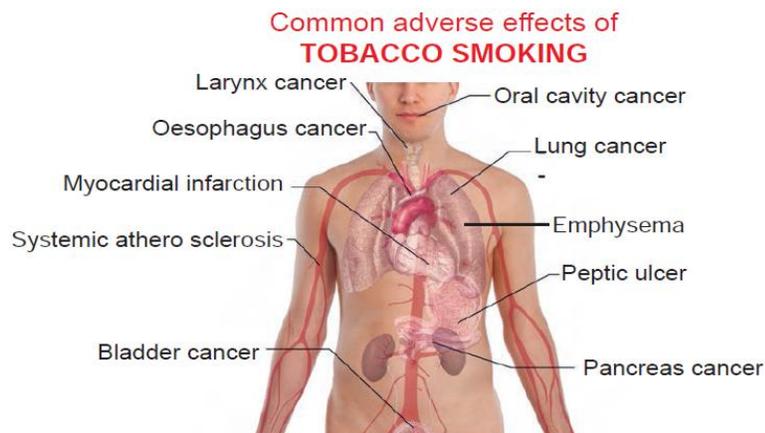
**In women :** Smoking creates an imbalance in estrogen hormone in women and reduces bloodflow to genital organs. Women who smoke can develop diseases in the fallopian tubes and their egg production can be affected. Smoking can cause abortion. It accelerates the ageing process and can cause early menopause.

Growth can suffer retardation when a mother smokes during pregnancy. It affects the brain development of the baby and reduces the IQ. This happens even when the mother is a passive smoker. The chances of miscarriage, premature birth and foetal death also increases.

**In men:** Smoking causes damages to the male reproductive system in many ways. Men who smoke have a higher risk of developing impotency.

## DRUG ABUSE - NARCOTIC DRUGS

A drug or other substance affecting mood or behaviour and sold for non-medical purposes are called illegal drugs or narcotics. Consumption of such drugs over a long period of time have a direct effect on the central nervous system and its related problems. Heroin, opium, cocaine are some examples of narcotic drugs.



### Harmful effects of drug abuse include:

impaired health, absence from school and college, and tendency to commit crimes like theft, rape or murder.

### Signs of drug abuse

- Sudden change of mood and temper.
- Bouts of drowsiness or sleeplessness.
- Body pain, nausea, unsteady gait.
- Losing interest in job and studies.
- Telling lies and stealing money.

### Dealing in Narcotic is an offence and all these come under punishable acts

- Possession even in a small quantity.

- Cultivation of drug crops without permission.
- Allowing your premises to store, sell or consumption.
- Illicit manufacture, sale, purchase and transportation.
- Trafficking of drugs is a non-bailable offence (Prison sentence up to 20 years and fine up to Rs.2 lakhs)
- Death penalty for repeat offenders.

**TREATMENT OF ADDICTION**

It involves the management of alcoholism and drug abuse. There are Governmental and non-governmental organizations in our country which have rehabilitation centres to treat and counsel drug addicts and alcoholics by means of medical and psychological approaches. The following are some of the steps taken in a rehabilitation centre.

First step	The identification of addicted individuals.
Second step	The composition of the drug is analyzed.
Third step	The addicted individual is studied to find out whether the dependency is physical or psychological.
Fourth step	A suitable chemotherapy is given to the addicts to detoxify the drug consumed.
Fifth step	Treatment should be given for a long time.
Sixth step	There should be periodical observation given according to his/her physical, mental, social and occupational status.

**HEALTHY LIFESTYLE**

“Healthy lifestyle” is a term given to a group of habits like healthy eating, being physically active, leading a smoke-free and stress-free life. India is predicted to become the diabetic and cardio-vascular disease capital of the world.

**Obesity**

Addiction to rich food can lead to obesity. It is defined as an excessive accumulation of fat in the body. It will to increased health problems. Lethargy, sluggishness and difficulty in carrying out the activities of daily living are some of the adverse effects of obesity. The causes of obesity are unhealthy dietary habits, lack of physical activity, genetic susceptibility, endocrine disorders and some medicines.

**Prevention of Obesity**

In order to avoid obesity, we can make dietary and lifestyle changes, some of which are listed below:

- Eat plenty of food rich in fibre such as fruits and green leafy vegetables. Intake of steamed and oil-free foods like idli, idiyappam and puttu is recommended.
- Nuts, whole grains, seasonal fruits and vegetables can be consumed.
- Eating fish twice a week helps to prevent formation of blood clots in arteries, as it contains Omega-3 fatty acids.
- Eat less red meat (mutton, beef) and fried foods (chips, samosas) because they raise the blood cholesterol level.

- Milk and milk products (ghee, butter, cheese) are a good source of calcium, but excessive amount of creamy, fatty milk leads to obesity.
- Avoid high calorie fast foods like pizzas, burgers and French fries.
- Reduce dietary sugars (sweets, sugary drinks, chocolates) and salt (pickles, pappads) in the diet.
- Cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption should be avoided.

**Physical Activities**

- Reduce or limit the time of watching television, using computer and playing video games.
- Increase physical activity to burn calories which in turn enhances optimal blood circulation.e.g. Walking for an hour every day, playing outdoor games, jogging, running, cycling, swimming or dancing.
- Aim for ideal weight by following appropriate dietary habits and adequate physical activity.

**Stress Relieving Activities**

The following activities can relieve us from stress. Share your feelings with family and friends, manage your time, get enough sleep, spend time with nature, listen to music, engage in gardening, painting, playing with pets or going out for picnics with family, or any activity that helps you to relax.