

Alcohol and drug use

How to recognize there's a problem



The misuse of drugs and alcohol affects millions of Americans, either directly or indirectly, everyday. In fact, more than 20 million people over the age of 12 in the U.S. have substance use disorder (SUD). Including the more than 14 million people who have alcohol use disorder.¹ It's important to understand the effects of using a substance and how to spot signs of misuse.

Alcohol use

It's true that light and moderate drinking can offer potential health benefits like lowering the risk of stroke or diabetes. However, heavy drinking and alcohol use disorder can lead to an increased risk for heart and liver disease, hepatitis, depression, cancer, and high blood pressure.²

The move from moderate to heavy drinking may not be obvious, but certain signs and symptoms could indicate a problem, including:³

- Being unable to limit alcohol intake
- Wanting to cut back on drinking or making unsuccessful attempts
- Continuing to drink even when it's causing physical, social, or interpersonal problems
- Failing to fulfill major obligations due to repeated alcohol use

What's a standard drink?²

Moderate drinking is defined as no more than one drink a day for women or two drinks a day for men. However, one drink might be less than you think. For example, the following drinks contain the same amount of alcohol even though they're different sizes.

- **Beer:** 12 fluid ounces
- **Wine:** 5 fluid ounces
- **Distilled spirits:** 80 proof: 1.5 fluid ounces



Drug use

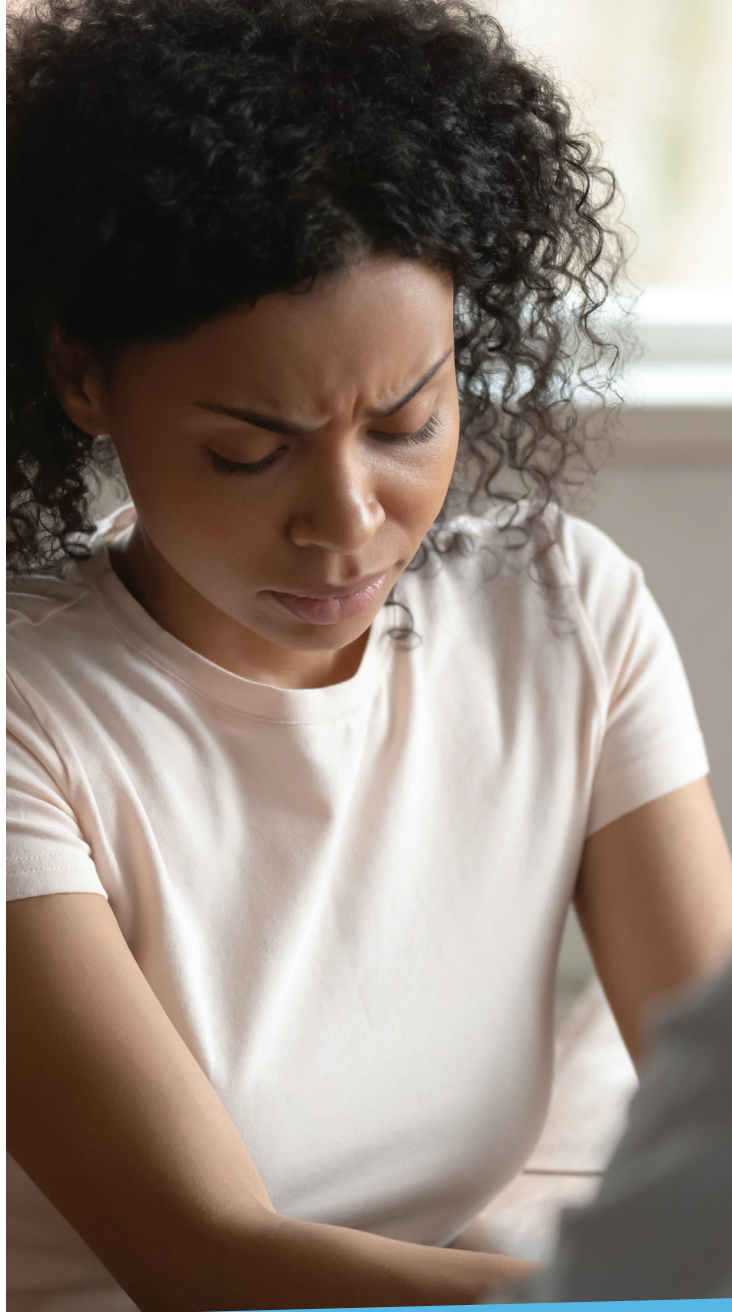
Substance use involves the use of certain drugs, including marijuana, heroin, cocaine and crack, methamphetamine (meth), hallucinogens, inhalants, and prescription medications.¹ Along with the risk of addiction, using these substances can lead to physical and behavioral health issues, such as:^{4, 5}

- Stroke
- Heart attack
- HIV/AIDS
- Cancer
- Paranoia
- Aggressiveness
- Hallucinations
- Loss of self-control

Signs of substance use disorder (addiction)

Substance use disorder happens when someone loses the ability to control their drug use. Common signs of this disease include:⁶

- Feeling the need to use it regularly
- Overspending or stealing money to get it
- Experiencing intense cravings when trying to stop
- Needing more of the substance over time to achieve the same effect



Help is available

If you or a covered dependent are struggling with drugs or alcohol, make an appointment to talk to your doctor as soon as possible. Your health plan may also have programs that can help. Check your benefits details by logging in to [anthem.com/ca](https://www.anthem.com/ca).

You can also visit the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services website at [samhsa.gov/find-treatment](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-treatment) for more information.

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website: Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (September 2020): [samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt29393/2019NSDUHFRPDFWHTML/2019NSDUHFR1PDFW090120.pdf](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt29393/2019NSDUHFRPDFWHTML/2019NSDUHFR1PDFW090120.pdf).

² Mayo Clinic website: Alcohol use: Weighing risks and benefits (October 26, 2019): [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org).

³ Mayo Clinic website: Alcohol Use Disorder (accessed June 2021): [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org).

⁴ National Institute on Drug Abuse website: Health Consequences of Drug Misuse (accessed June 2021): [drugabuse.gov](https://www.drugabuse.gov).

⁵ Gateway Foundation website: Effects of Drug Abuse and Addiction (accessed June 2021): [gatewayfoundation.org](https://www.gatewayfoundation.org).

⁶ Mayo Clinic website: Drug addiction (substance use disorder) (accessed June 2021): [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org).