



Learn How to Address **Addiction** in the Family

First part

By: **Enny Catherine Ospina Rojas**
Specialist in Family Studies
Directora Centro de Familia VID

1. How is an addict defined?

An addict is a person who suffers from a Substance Use Disorder (SUD), characterized by the compulsive and problematic use of drugs despite negative consequences.

2. What substances qualify a person as an addict?

A person is considered an addict if they are dependent on one or more of the following substances (see Health Letter 52):

- **Opiates and Opioids:** Heroin, morphine, codeine, fentanyl, and oxycodone.
- **Stimulants:** Cocaine, methamphetamines, amphetamines (including prescribed medications like Adderall), and MDMA (ecstasy).
- **Central Nervous System (CNS) Depressants:** Alcohol, barbiturates,

benzodiazepines (like diazepam and alprazolam).

- **Cannabis:** Marijuana and hashish.
- **Hallucinogens:** LSD (lysergic acid), peyote (mescaline), psilocybin (magic mushrooms), and ayahuasca.
- **Inhalants:** Glues, aerosols, and solvents.
- **New Psychoactive Substances (NPS):** Synthetic cannabinoids (like K2 and Spice) and synthetic cathinones (like bath salts).
- **Nicotine:** Tobacco (though not often considered clinically in addiction contexts).
- **Prescription Medications:** Opioid pain relievers, anti-anxiety and sedative medications, and prescribed stimulants (e.g., for ADHD).

3. How long does it take for someone to become addicted?

The timeline varies significantly and depends on multiple factors. There is no exact duration that applies universally.

4. What strategies should be implemented to prevent drug use by an addict?

Medical and Therapeutic Treatment:

- Medically supervised detoxification: Helps manage withdrawal symptoms.
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): Identifies and changes thought and behavior patterns.
- Motivational therapy.
- Family therapy: Enhances support and involves the family in the process.
- Group therapy: Provides support and shared experiences.

Psychosocial Support:

- Support groups and self-help organizations: Examples include Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA).
- Counseling: Addresses underlying issues and offers coping strategies.

Healthy Lifestyle Habits:

- Regular exercise: Reduces stress and improves overall well-being.
- Healthy diet: Aids physical and mental recovery.
- Routines and structures: Help avoid triggering situations.



Education and Prevention:

- Drug education: Helps understand effects and risks.
- Life skills development: Decision-making, stress management, and coping strategies.

Community Interventions:

- Support networks: Involving friends, family, and community leaders.

Holistic Treatment:

It focuses on comprehensive health, considering the person as a whole, rather than to focus on symptoms or illnesses.

Focuses on comprehensive health, considering the person as a whole (BIO-Psycho-Social-Spiritual being) rather than just symptoms or illnesses.

- Therapeutic methods such as conventional medicine, alternative therapies and changes in lifestyle.
- Mindfulness: Encourages presence and awareness, promoting calmness, mental clarity, and well-being.
- Alternative therapies: Acupuncture or yoga to complement traditional treatments.

Follow-up and Continuous Support:

- Follow-up plans: Regular contact with health professionals to monitor progress and adjust treatment.
- Emergency resources: Access to help lines and services for potential relapses.
- Combined strategies significantly increase the chances of success in recovery.

5. How to Approach an Addicted Family Member

Emotional Preparation:

- Manage emotions like frustration, blame, or anger to foster productive conversation.
- Educate yourself about addiction to better understand and support the situation.



Choose the Right Time:

- Speak when the person is calm and sober.
- Avoid moments of tension or arguments.

Speak with Empathy:

- Actively listen, validate their perspective, and maintain eye contact to show understanding.



Don't judge

- Speak with concern and affection, avoiding judgments or criticism. For example: "I am worried about what is happening and I want to help you."
- Avoid lecturing or blaming, as this can cause you to become confrontational defensive.

Listen actively

- Give space to express feelings and concerns. This allows that the person feels understood.
- Listen without interruption or minimizing, showing respect and openness.



Offer Support Without Enabling Behavior:

- Help without tolerating harmful behaviors or excusing the consequences of addiction.
- Suggest concrete alternatives, like seeking professional help, instead of just expressing concern.

Encourage Professional Help:

- Recommend specialized help such as psychological therapy, support groups (like Narcotics Anonymous), or medical treatment.
- Offer to accompany them through the process for mutual support.

Establish Clear Boundaries:

- Limit financial assistance and condition cohabitation on accepting treatment.
- Communicate boundaries respectfully but firmly.

Seek Support for the Family:

- Families may also need emotional or psychological support. Groups like Al-Anon are a good option.

Be Patient:

- Recovery is a long process with possible setbacks. Maintaining calmness and consistency is essential, even if relapses occur.

Promote a Healthy Environment:

- Habits such as exercise, a balanced diet and activities in family, fosters a positive environment for recovery.
- Approaching a family member with drug addiction problems is a situation complex, but with empathy, understanding, and the right resources, you can be key in your recovery.



Recommended readings

Health Letter VID 52: learn about drugs of abuse

Pages consulted on the web

<https://www.clinicbarcelona.org/asistencia/enfermedades/adicciones>

<https://nida.nih.gov/es/areas-de-investigacion/sustancias-de-abuso-habitual>

<https://www.paho.org/es/temas/abuso-sustancias>

https://bibliotecadigital.udea.edu.co/bitstream/10495/17319/1/Carvajal-Blanca_2015_AdiccionesIntervencionTratamiento.pdf

Images taken from Freepik

COMITÉ EDITORIAL

Salud VID • Danny Javier Robles Gómez - Director General • Juan Mario Jaramillo Acosta - Director Laboratorio Clínico

• Carlos Mario Cardona Betancur - Jefe Laboratorio Dental • Ana María Montoya Duque - Microbióloga

• Margarita María Montañó Hernández - Coordinadora Odontológica • Daniel Mauricio Castañeda Vargas - Coordinador de Mercadeo.

Organización VID • Santiago Estrada Mesa - Asistencia, docencia e investigación.

Clínica Cardio VID • Juan Carlos González Arroyave - Director Científico.

REVISIÓN Y DISEÑO Departamento de Comunicaciones Organización VID

