NCADD
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

Frequently Asked Questions and Facts About Alcohol and Drugs

Question: How quickly can someone become addicted to alcohol and drugs?

Answer: There is no easy answer. As with any chronic disease, vulnerability to addiction differs from person to person. If and how quickly a person becomes addicted depends on many factors, including biology (genetics - family history), age, gender, environment, traumatic experiences, type of drugs and interactions among these factors. While one person may use alcohol or drugs one or many times and suffer no ill effects, another person may overdose with first use, or become addicted after a few uses. There is no way to know in advance how quickly someone will become addicted. But, the single most important predictor is a family history of alcoholism and/or addiction. Plain and simple, some people's bodies respond to the effects of alcohol and drugs differently than others.

Question: How do I know if someone is addicted to alcohol or drugs?

Answer: The simple answer…….continued use despite negative consequences. If a person's use of alcohol or drugs causes problems at work, financial problems, family problems, social problems, relationship problems or physical problems **and** they continue to use, then he or she probably is addicted. And while a person who becomes addicted may believe they can stop any time they want, most often they cannot stop and stay stopped on their own, and will need professional help—first to determine if they are addicted, and then to obtain treatment. Support from friends and family can be critical in getting people into mutual aid/self help groups and/or treatment.

Question: Since treatment didn't work the first time, there's no point in trying again, right?

Answer: For some, long-term recovery from addiction to alcohol or drugs may start after their first mutual aid/self help meeting or with the first time they go to treatment. But, like other chronic illnesses, recovery from addiction requires a life long commitment to a program of change. For some, relapse back to active use of alcohol or drugs may play a critical role in their rededication to

their recovery. So, relapse can be a signal to get back on track, either by going back to meetings, treatment or adjusting the treatment approach.

Question: I heard that the person has to hit "rock bottom" before you can help them. Is that true?

Answer: Recovery can begin at any point in the addiction process. Like other chronic illnesses, the earlier a person gets help the better. The longer their use of alcohol or drugs continues, the harder it is to treat. You don't have to wait until they have lost everything to help.

Question: My daughter only drinks beer, doesn't drink every day and says she's not alcoholic. Is she right?

Answer: Alcoholism is NOT defined by what you drink, when you drink it, or even how much you drink. Whether a person drinks every day or only on weekends, drinks shots of liquor or just drinks beer or wine, what matters most is what happens when they drink. If her drinking is causing problems in her home, at work, physically, financially, emotionally or legally, it is time to get help.

Question: Is it true that if our family member is forced into treatment, that treatment won't work?

Answer: Treatment does not have to be voluntary for it to be successful. Because of the effect of alcohol and drugs on the person, there are times when they may be incapable of making a decision to seek help on their own. People who are pressured into treatment by their family or friends, employer or a judge are just as likely to benefit from treatment as those who enter "on their own".