

SELF-HELP STRATEGIES

For cutting down or
stopping substance use

A guide



World Health
Organization

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1 Introduction

If you think your substance use is putting you at risk of experiencing health, social, legal, psychological, work or family problems then this guide will help you to weigh up your substance use behavior and give you some ideas about how to change it.



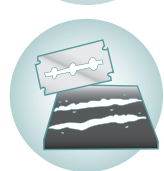
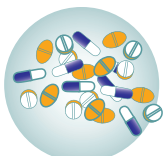
If you experience severe withdrawal symptoms or serious discomfort when you stop using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs, you should seek medical help from your doctor, health care worker or someone from a specialist drug and alcohol service.

2 How do you know if you are at risk?

Different substances have different harms and risks.

For example you are at risk of experiencing problems:

- if you use tobacco products - especially by smoking;
- if you have a high consumption of alcoholic beverages or drink to intoxication;
- if you use substances such as cannabis, cocaine, amphetamine-type stimulants (including ecstasy and methamphetamine), inhalants, non prescribed sedatives or sleeping pills, hallucinogens, or opioids.



THIS GUIDE IS DESIGNED FOR PEOPLE ABOVE 18 YEARS OF AGE WHO ARE AT MODERATE RISK OF SUBSTANCE RELATED PROBLEMS BUT DO NOT HAVE SEVERE SUBSTANCE RELATED PROBLEMS OR DEPENDENCE.

If you have a copy of this document it may be because your doctor or health care worker has asked you some questions about your substance use and thinks you might be at risk of harm from one or more substances.

THE RISK OF EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS CAN VARY FROM INDIVIDUAL TO INDIVIDUAL AND DEPEND ON YOUR ENVIRONMENT, HOW MUCH YOU USE, THE WAY YOU USE, YOUR AGE AND GENDER ETC.

IT IS POSSIBLE
TO CHANGE
SUBSTANCE
USE
BEHAVIOUR,
MANY
PEOPLE HAVE
DONE IT.

Your doctor or health care worker may have given you a feedback card and information leaflets which contain information about specific health problems related to the substance(s) you use.

3 What is a substance use problem?

Substance use problems can arise as a result of acute intoxication, regular use or dependence - and from the way in which substances are used.

It is possible for a person to have problems from all of these.

Using substances by injection can cause serious health problems no matter which substance is injected. Injecting any drug is a significant risk factor for contracting bloodborne diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis B and C. People who inject drugs have a higher risk of dependence and are likely to have more severe dependence than those who do not inject.

4 Getting started

You might already have decided that your substance use is causing problems for you.

Or, you may want to check whether you really are using too much. Either way the rest of this booklet will help you look at where you are now, and how you could make changes.

Changing our behaviours, including substance use, can seem scary or difficult but It is possible.

5 Getting support

You can use this guide by yourself without involving anyone else in what you are doing. However, it can be an enormous help to have your own supporter - someone who understands what you want to do and is willing to spend time helping.

A supporter needs to be someone you trust and feel comfortable with, such as your partner, a friend, a relative, someone at work, a nurse, a religious person, a counselor or a doctor. It is important that your supporter does not have a problem with substance use at the same time as trying to help you with your substance use.

If you ask someone to support you and, after thinking it over, that person says no, it is worth asking someone else. Many people appreciate being asked to help - it has rewards for them too.

Give your supporter this guide to read before you start, especially the Appendix "Advice for supporters".



As the saying goes, *A thousand mile journey starts with a single step.*

It doesn't really matter if you take breaks along the way: you'll still get there.

What counts is deciding you want to make changes, and then making them,

ONE SMALL
STEP AT
A TIME.

3

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