

Could You Be Hooked? Surprising Addictions

How Does Addiction Start?

Anything that alters your mood can become addictive. It begins as self-medication to help you manage pain. The reward you get when you see that text message pop up, find the perfect pair of shoes, or roll a lucky seven makes you want more. That becomes something you can't live without.

Are All Addictions the Same?

Is addiction to shopping or texting the same as being hooked on drugs or alcohol? We know these things can affect your brain in many of the same ways. But experts don't yet agree about how far those similarities go. If you feel you have a habit that's out of control, talk to your doctor or a therapist.

Smartphones

You can't quit it, can you? You keep it with you all the time and check it every few minutes. You work too much because you can't turn it off on the weekend. You ignore the people you're having dinner with to catch a text or a post from someone miles away. Get help from a doctor, counselor or other professional if your phone is getting in the way of your life.

Social Media

Do you spend so much time on Facebook and Twitter you feel like you're addicted? New studies show that you might be among the 10% of social media users who really are hooked. The random pace of posts affects your brain the same way that cocaine does. Sharing details about yourself with others also creates a rush of positive feelings that leaves you wanting more.

Caffeine

Do you *need* your morning jolt of caffeine? That's not necessarily an addiction, but trying to cut it out of your life may leave you anxious for a fix and nursing a serious headache. That's called withdrawal.

Chocolate and Other Sweets

Sometimes you have to have it. And you may not be able to stop. Don't feel bad -- foods high in carbs, fats, and sugar can affect your brain just like drugs do. Jonesing (to have a strong need, desire for something) for an occasional milkshake doesn't mean you're hooked. But your sweet tooth can get out of control and lead to other health problems.

Shopping

We've all bought something we don't really need. If it happens a lot, what you're really looking for might be some dopamine, the feel-good-chemical for your brain. It could also mean you have impulse-control problems or anxiety issues. Hit the stores -- or the one-click online purchase button -- too often and it can cause financial, legal, and social problems.

Gambling

As many as 8 million Americans have a problem. Whether you do it in person or online, at slot machines or the poker table, that rush provides your brain a hit of dopamine and makes you happy -- for a while. But if lady luck isn't with you, too much betting can wreak havoc with your finances, job, and family life.

Plastic Surgery

Some people can't get enough nips and tucks. That's because many of them have "body dysmorphic disorder" and are obsessed with defects only they can see. This problem is caused by some of the same brain chemicals that play a role in addiction.



When someone has a substance use disorder, they usually build up a tolerance to the substance, meaning they need larger amounts to feel the effects.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, people begin taking drugs for a variety of reasons, including:

- **to feel good** — feeling of pleasure, “high” or "intoxication"
- **to feel better** — relieve stress, forget problems, or feel numb
- **to do better** — improve performance or thinking
- **curiosity and peer pressure** or experimenting

In addition to substances, people can also develop addiction to behaviors, such as gambling ([gambling disorder](#)).

People with substance use and behavioral addictions may be aware of their problem but not be able to stop even if they want and try to. The addiction may cause physical and psychological problems as well as interpersonal problems such as with family members and friends or at work. Alcohol and drug use is one of the leading causes of preventable illnesses and premature death nationwide.

<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/addictions.html> Dealing with Addiction(listening)

<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/alcohol.html?WT.ac=t-ra> alcohol addiction (listening)

Find Your Reason

To get motivated, you need a powerful, personal reason to quit. It may be to protect your family from secondhand smoke. Or lower your chance of getting lung cancer, heart disease, or other conditions. Or to look and feel younger. Choose a reason that is strong enough to outweigh the urge to light up.

Prepare Before You Go 'Cold Turkey'

There's more to it than just tossing your cigarettes out. Smoking is an addiction. The brain is hooked on nicotine. Without it, you'll go through withdrawal. Line up support in advance. Ask your doctor about all the methods that will help, such as quit-smoking classes and apps, counseling, medication, and hypnosis. You'll be ready for the day you choose to quit.

Consider Nicotine Replacement Therapy

When you stop smoking, nicotine withdrawal may give you headaches, affect your mood, or sap your energy. The craving for "just one drag" is tough. Nicotine replacement therapy can curb these urges. Studies show that nicotine gum, lozenges, and patches improve your chances of success when you're also in a quit-smoking program.

Lean On Your Loved Ones

Tell your friends, family, and other people you're close to that you're trying to quit. They can encourage you to keep going, especially when you're tempted to light up. You can also join a support group or talk to a counselor. Behavioral therapy is a type of counseling that helps you identify and stick to quit-smoking strategies. Even a few sessions may help.

Avoid Alcohol and Other Triggers

When you drink, it's harder to stick to your no-smoking goal. So try to limit alcohol when you first quit. Likewise, if you often smoke when you drink coffee, switch to tea for a few weeks. If you usually smoke after meals, find something else to do instead, like brushing your teeth, taking a walk, texting a friend, or chewing gum.

Get Moving

Being active can curb nicotine cravings and ease some withdrawal symptoms. When you want to reach for a cigarette, put on your inline skates or jogging shoes instead. Even mild exercise helps, such as walking your dog or pulling weeds in the garden. The calories you burn will also ward off weight gain as you quit smoking.

Eat Fruits and Veggies

Don't try to diet while you give up cigarettes. Too much deprivation can easily backfire. Instead, keep things simple and try to eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein.

Try and Try Again

Many people try several times before giving up cigarettes for good. If you light up, don't get discouraged. Instead, think about what led to your relapse, such as your emotions or the setting you were in. Use it as an opportunity to step up your commitment to quitting. Once you've made the decision to try again, set a "quit date" within the next month.

Remember That Time Is on Your Side

As soon as you quit, you start to get immediate health benefits. After only 20 minutes, your heart rate goes back to normal. Within a day, your blood's carbon monoxide level also falls back into place. In just 2-3 weeks, you will start to lower your odds of having a heart attack. In the long run, you will also lower your chance of getting lung cancer and other cancers.