



# Substance Abuse Resources

Prepared by the Glen Rock Board of Health

Substance abuse is a problem that can affect people of all ages. Many people think of abused drugs as being those that are sold illegally on the street. However, drug abuse often starts with the use of medications that are in our medicine cabinets. A study in 2011 found that among those between ages 12 and 25, nonmedical use of prescription drugs was second only to marijuana in illicit drug use. Due to the medical conditions that are common with aging, older adults are likely to be exposed to potentially addictive medications. They are more likely than other adults to accidentally misuse prescription drugs. Careful use of medications and proper disposal of those that are no longer needed can help prevent substance abuse. Alcohol, legal and easily available is the most common form of substance abuse.

Drugs change the way our brains work, making it easy to become addicted. This is especially a problem for teens, whose brains are developing judgment and self-control. Drugs affect the brain's "reward circuit" by flooding the brain with dopamine and making the user feel a need to repeat the use of the drug. However, the brain adapts and over time needs more of the drug to feel the "reward." This tolerance to the drug makes the user seek higher doses to get the same high that they had initially.

As we age, the ability to metabolize substances slows. Therefore drugs may remain in the body longer and be more potent. Drugs taken improperly may worsen conditions that are common with aging. They can aggravate mood disorders, breathing and heart problems, and memory problems. Judgment, reaction time and coordination may be affected and cause accidents. These symptoms may be confused for those of other medical issues.

People of all ages may use drugs illegally to self medicate, rather than seek help with mental health issues. Seeing a mental health professional for stress, anxiety, depression and other mental health problems may prevent drug use. Some people are genetically predisposed to drug addiction. Environment plays a role too. Factors such as peer pressure, abuse, and stress are among many that may influence drug use.

Substance addiction is a chronic disease that is treatable with the use of either medication or therapy, or a combination of both. It is difficult to cure but it can be controlled with treatment. There may be relapses, but treatment that is tailored to the patient works best. Your physician may be able to recommend services that can provide treatment.

There are resources available to help quit the use of drugs or alcohol. Options may include behavioral therapies or medications. Treatments maybe outpatient or inpatient. Both in person and telehealth options are available. Below is a list of some resources for information about treatment options:

Bergen County Health & Safety Hotline, available 24/7, 201-225-7000, Office of Alcohol & Drug Dependency provides assessment and referral for treatment for Bergen County residents.

State of New Jersey Addiction Services Treatment Directory, 1-844-REACHNJ (1-844-732-2465)

<https://njsams.rutgers.edu/TreatmentDirectory/>

IME Addictions Access Center, 24/7 1-844-276-2777,  
<https://twpoceannj.gov/notices/IME-Addictions-Access-Center.pdf>

If you need help, do not wait to call. By quitting, you will be able to improve the quality of your life and your overall health.

