

NATIONAL **DRUG & ALCOHOL** FACTS WEEK



Drug usage in South Africa is twice the world norm. At least 15% of South Africans have a drug problem and this is expected to rise.

Dr David Bayever – Central Drug Authority, South Africa

WHAT IS SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

It is the excessive use of drugs and alcohol. This could either be in a casual setting, social drinking, drug experimentation or more serious addictive behaviour like binge drinking and constant drug abuse.



WHO IS AFFECTED BY SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

It is important to know that alcohol and substance abuse can be harmful to your body, mind – and other people. When you are in the grip of an addiction, you can become angry, irritable, anxious and even dangerous to those around you. Drugs contain chemicals that change the way the body works and cause reactions like extreme anger and violence.



HOW DOES SUBSTANCE ABUSE BEGIN?

People turn to drugs and alcohol for many reasons. The most common are:

- To forget or escape reality
- To deal with depression, anxiety or other mental illnesses
- As a way of relieving stress
- As a relaxation tool
- As a confidence booster
- Because friends, family and other acquaintances do it as well
- For enjoyment
- As a result of boredom
- As a bad habit

HELP IS AVAILABLE

An addiction can make life very difficult and you may experience ongoing symptoms such as depression and anxiety.

The first step to conquering the problem is, of course, admitting you have one. Once you recognise the signs and symptoms – get help immediately. Remember, there are millions of people who go through substance abuse, so you are not alone or unusual, and don't need to feel like an outsider.

As each person is different, so too are the treatment methods. For the most part, substance abuse treatment deals with detoxification (where the body starts to rid itself of the substance), counselling and therapy, medication, and treatment for other issues such as depression and anxiety.

Overcoming substance abuse is not an overnight task. You need to commit for the long term and this is where family and professional support is also essential.



Substance abuse can cause interpersonal relationship problems with family and friends, work-related issues, financial difficulties and physical harm to your brain, heart, kidney and liver. It can even cause suicidal tendencies.

AECI Medical Aid Society's Mental Health benefit includes treatment for alcoholism and drug dependency.

Please contact the Scheme for authorisation to access this benefit.