

# Health Bulletin

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

#61 in a series of Health Bulletins on issues of pressing interest to all New Yorkers

## Help to Stop Using

### Drug problems can be treated



• Available in Spanish and Chinese: call 311 or visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health)  
• Disponible en español: llame al 311 o visite [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health)  
• 需要中文服務，可電 311 或造訪網址: [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health)



## Anybody can have a drug problem

- Men and women of all ages, ethnicities, income levels and social backgrounds can get into trouble with drugs. Many teenagers, even children, have drug problems, too.
- People often use drugs to relieve stress, escape depression, or treat emotional pain.
- Some people call this “self medication.”
- Self medication seems to work for awhile but in the end it only makes things worse.

## Different types of drugs

- **Illegal “street” drugs**, such as cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine.
- **Prescription medicines**, such as valium, oxycodone and ritalin.
- **Over-the-counter medicines**, such as cough syrup, diet pills and sleep aids.

### Many people use more than one drug at a time.

- Some people mix illegal drugs with prescription and over-the-counter medicines.
  - Often, people who use drugs also smoke and drink heavily.
  - Combining different drugs can be very dangerous – even fatal.



## Tips for Safer Use

**If you shoot drugs, stay safe until you can stop.**

### 1. TREAT OVERDOSE!

- Call 911 FAST and say, “My friend is not breathing, this is an emergency.”
- Do rescue (mouth-to-mouth) breathing.
- Give Narcan (naloxone) if you have it.
- Lay the person on his or her side to prevent choking.

2. Always use a new syringe. Call 1-800-LifeNet (1-800-543-3638) or 311 to find a syringe exchange program.

3. Know your HIV status. Get tested for HIV, and get tested and treated for hepatitis.

There are other things you can do.

Call 311 and ask for “Tips for Safer Use.”



## What is a ‘problem’?

- A drug problem is *any* level of drug use that harms the user or places others at risk.
- You don’t have to be physically dependent to have a drug problem. Symptoms of drug problems include:
  - Having work, school, home or legal problems due to drug use.
  - Continued use of drugs despite these problems, or risks to health and safety.

### A drug problem often progresses to dependence:

- **Craving** – a very strong urge to use. May use more than one drug at a time.
- **Tolerance** – needing more and more of the drug to get the same effect.
- **Loss of control** – can’t stop or cut down no matter what (health problems, money problems, legal problems).
- **Withdrawal** – feeling sick when a drug is stopped.
- **Blackouts** – forgetting all or part of what happens when drinking or using.
- **Preoccupation** – thinking a lot about getting and using drugs. Neglecting family, friends, work, school.

**People who take only prescription medicines can develop dependence, too.**

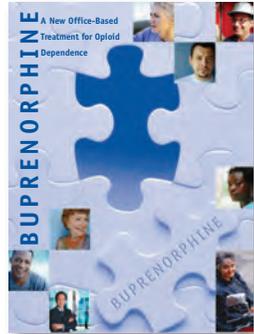
## Help is available!

### Drug problems can be treated.

- Talk to your doctor or a substance abuse counselor. Ask for help to quit.
  - Be honest about which drugs you use, how much, and how often – as well as problems that drug use is causing.
  - People who are drug dependent may need treatment.

### Many options are available.

- **Medications** to help taper off drug use, ease withdrawal, or prevent relapse. *For example:*
  - You can get replacement therapy for heroin and other opiate dependence:
  - Methadone is available through many licensed programs.
  - Buprenorphine is a prescription medication that requires only monthly doctor visits.
- **Counseling** to find ways to avoid drug use and deal positively with underlying issues.
- **Self-help organizations**, such as 12-step programs with regular meetings that provide a support network.



# Do you (or someone you know) have a drug or alcohol problem?

## Take the CAGE\* Test

Have you ever:	Yes	No
<b>1</b> Thought you should... <b>C</b> ut down on your drug use or drinking?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>2</b> Become... <b>A</b> nnoyed when someone criticized your drug use or drinking?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>3</b> Felt scared, bad, or... <b>G</b> uilty about your drug use or drinking?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>4</b> Needed an... <b>E</b> ye-opener drug or drink to feel better in the morning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**YES to 1 or 2 Questions = Possible Problem**

**YES to 3 or 4 Questions = Probable Dependence**

\*CAGE-AID (adapted to include drugs). Source: Brown RL, Rounds LA. Conjoint screening questionnaires for alcohol and other drug abuse: criterion validity in a primary care practice. *Wis Med J.* 1995; 94:135-140.

## More Information and Help

- NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health) or call 311 and ask for **Drug Abuse**
- Health Bulletins: [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health) or call 311:
  - #27 Drug-Free Kids: Parents Can Make a Difference
  - #45 Depression: It's Treatable
  - #48 How Much Is Too Much (Alcohol)
  - #53 Healthy Parenting
- LifeNet (24-hour confidential help for alcohol and other substance abuse problems): 1-800-LifeNet (1-800-543-3638)
- Spanish LifeNet: 1-877-AYUDESE (1-877-298-3373)
- Asian LifeNet (Mandarin, Cantonese and Korean): 1-877-990-8585
- National Institute on Drug Abuse: [www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)
- Partnership for a Drug-Free America: [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)
- Narcotics Anonymous: [www.na.org](http://www.na.org)
- Cocaine Anonymous: [www.ca.org](http://www.ca.org)
- Alcoholics Anonymous: [www.nyintergroup.org](http://www.nyintergroup.org) or 212-941-0094

**DIAL  
311**

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**DIAL 311** For Non-Emergency New York City Services  
Telephone Interpretation in More Than 170 Languages