

# Addiction vs Dependence: Understanding the Differences



Addiction is marked by a change in behavior caused by the biochemical changes in the brain after continued substance abuse. Substance use becomes the main priority of the addict, regardless of the harm they may cause to themselves or others. An addiction causes people to act irrationally when they don't have the substance they are addicted to in their system. We believe everyone deserves .access to accurate, unbiased information about mental health and addiction



## **Key Differences Between Addiction and Dependence**

Long-term inpatient treatment programs vary in length, but typically last between 3 to 18 •  
.months

Some jurisdictions are moving towards treating addiction as a health issue rather than a •  
.criminal one, but progress is slow and uneven

.But our genetic makeup doesn't necessarily rule our choices and our lives •

Working with a therapist helps you navigate the challenges of addiction while treating any co- •  
.occurring mental health issues at the same time

Addiction recovery can involve addressing both physical and psychological health. Tolerance is when the body's response to a substance diminishes over time. A person may develop tolerance to a drug if they use it for a long time. Mental dependence is when a person relies on a substance or behavior to cope with emotional challenges. For example, a person may drink alcohol when they feel stressed but otherwise feel no compulsion to drink. Many people who use the term "dependence" are .referring to physical dependence



## **The Difference between Dependence and Addiction**

On the other hand, cocaine, while not typically causing severe physical dependence, is highly addictive due to its intense psychological effects. We know that the difference between addiction and dependence is often challenging to understand. Some organizations may have different names or definitions or use the words interchangeably, which causes mass confusion. The [addiction vs dependence](#) term substance use disorder (SUD) is the preferred way of saying it in the scientific community. Since consistency is lacking, it's important to establish some ground rules. Even if you .only take drugs as prescribed, it's important to monitor your substance use

## **Standard Outpatient Programs**

A supportive community improves your chances of recovery and reduces feelings of isolation and stigma. In a medically supervised detox program, healthcare professionals monitor your symptoms and provide aid when necessary. In some cases, they use medications like buprenorphine to avoid discomfort and dangerous symptoms. For alcohol addiction and opioid addiction, supervised detox

.may be necessary depending on the severity of physical dependence

## **Disorders**

No one starts with the intention of becoming addicted, but repeated use over time can drastically diminish control, leading to compulsive use. Although someone with a drug addiction can end their physical dependence on the drug through detox, the mental component of the addiction remains, and maintaining sobriety can be an ongoing struggle. Medically, and in practice, addiction is most often diagnosed using the DSM-5 category of substance use disorder