



# Addiction: Why Quitting is so Hard

By Southeast Health Group

Addiction is not a choice. This is one of many misperceptions about people with behavioral health problems. While it is true that the decision to use drugs or alcohol the first time is a matter of choice, physical addiction is a disease of the brain and body. Telling a person with an addiction to just stop using is like telling someone with cancer to quit choosing cancer, or a person with diabetes to quit choosing diabetes. It doesn't work that way for cancer or diabetes, and it won't work that way for addiction.

***“addiction hijacks a person’s ability to make decisions. It causes a compulsive need for a substance...”***

Why do people become addicted? Roughly half of a person's susceptibility to addiction can be attributed to genetics. This is why some people will use drugs frequently and for long periods of time and never become addicted. Others will use drugs only a few times and develop an addiction.

Addiction does not discriminate. People with substance use disorders can come from any

background, education level, income level, age, race or gender.

People living with addiction can benefit from medical help. At the brain-level, addiction hijacks a person's ability to make decisions.

It causes a compulsive need for a substance regardless of any negative physical, social, or legal consequences. It messes up the brain's reward system and eventually forces an addicted individual's baseline levels of dopamine (one of the chemicals in the brain that is responsible for positive feelings) to be significantly lower than that of a non-addicted individual's. This creates a physical sensation of stress, and causes the person to prioritize getting more of the substance over all the other priorities in his or her life.

The stress of withdrawal can be so severe that they skip school or work, neglect their children and other responsibilities, make poor financial decisions, and get into legal trouble in an effort to get more of the substance and relieve the pain and discomfort



of withdrawal. Sadly, over 100 people in the United States die from an opioid related drug overdose every day.

Southeast Health Group has developed a Regional Assessment Center with a withdrawal management unit to help people who are withdrawing from substances get on the road to recovery. Our 24/7 facility and professional staff create a safe and supportive environment where change can happen. We use medication-assisted treatment (MAT), peer support services, and drug and alcohol counseling to give people the tools they need to quit.

**If you or someone you love is living with an addiction, call 800-511-5446 today. SHG accepts Medicaid, private insurance and has a sliding fee scale. Don't delay, call today.**

[www.southeasthealthgroup.org](http://www.southeasthealthgroup.org)