



HARMFUL. HELPFUL.



Substance Use and Misuse for Wounded, Ill, and Injured Sailors and Marines

If you're struggling, we can help.

Using illegal drugs, misusing medications, or consuming excessive amounts of alcohol can impact your recovery and resilience. These are all behaviors that can complicate healing and prolong recovery from physical or psychological wounds, injuries, or illnesses. Substance use and misuse can also harm the lives of your friends and family. The Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Health Promotion and Wellness Department is committed to providing you with the tools you need to fight these harmful behaviors. We have the educational materials and resources to help you understand, avoid, or overcome the negative effects of excessive alcohol use and substance use.

Dealing with a situation without easy answers.

In many cases, your health care provider may dispense to you over-the-counter or prescription medications that, when taken correctly, can help manage symptoms of your wound, illness, or injury. However, misuse of these medications may have the opposite effect, derailing your recovery and resulting in negative health consequences. It may impact your ability to communicate, choose healthy behaviors, and make logical decisions. Unhealthy behaviors such as medication misuse, excessive alcohol use, and illegal drug use could also lead to addiction, which not only impacts you, but can negatively affect your co-workers, friends, family, and loved ones.

What is substance use and misuse?

Substance use includes using illegal drugs, consuming excessive amounts of alcohol, and misusing pharmaceuticals (both prescription and over-the-counter drugs).

Prescription misuse includes taking medications that were prescribed to someone else, taking medications outside of the prescribed timeframe, and taking medications in ways other than what was prescribed, such as consuming higher doses than recommended or for experiencing the feelings they cause.

Excessive alcohol use includes heavy drinking, binge drinking (five or more drinks in one sitting for men or four or more drinks in one sitting for women), underage drinking, and drinking while pregnant.¹ One should also avoid risky drinking (both the daily and weekly limits) which can result in negative health effects; risky drinking is more than four drinks on any day or 14 drinks per week for men, and more than three drinks on

any day or seven drinks per week for women.² Alcohol and drug use can hinder judgment and lead to harmful risk-taking behavior.

Impact on recovery and overall health.

Under the supervision of a medical professional, medications can support recovery from a wound, illness, or injury. However, self-medicating by taking prescription or over-the-counter drugs incorrectly, using illegal drugs, and drinking excessively can result in longer and more difficult rehabilitation and lead to additional devastating physical and psychological consequences such as: impaired wound healing;³ slowed or delayed recovery of brain injury;⁴ dangerous interactions between prescription medication and other substances, including alcohol;³ increased risk of a new injury, psychological health concerns such as depression, bruising, and infection.⁵

Take action if you notice a problem.

If you or someone you know is at risk:

- Talk to your Drug and Alcohol Program Advisor (DAPA) or Navy Drug and Alcohol Counselor.
- Speak to your commanding officer, XO, OIC, CMDCM/COB, or chaplain.
- Reach out to DoD medical personnel.
- Contact your Fleet and Family Support Center Counselor.

While the Navy and Marine Corps have a zero tolerance policy regarding drug misuse and abuse, with a potential consequence of administrative separation from the Navy, nothing is more important than your health.

If you or someone you know is at risk, please reach out to one of the contacts above. If you are looking for more information on the harmful effects of alcohol, visit the Military OneSource website at

www.militaryonesource.mil.

To learn how our resources and tools can facilitate recovery and strengthen resilience, visit us at [HTTP://WWW.MED.NAVY.MIL/SITES/NMCPHC/WOUNDED-ILL-AND-INJURED/PAGES/HEALTH-PROMOTION.ASPX](http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/wounded-ill-and-injured/pages/health-promotion.aspx).

For more information on your local resources, contact:

¹ What is Excessive Alcohol Use? Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/pdfs/excessive_alcohol_use.pdf. Updated March 2014. Accessed July 2015.

² Moyer, V. Screening and Behavioral Counseling Interventions in Primary Care to Reduce Alcohol Misuse: U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation Statement. *Ann Intern Med*. 2013;159(3):210-218. <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/Home/GetFile/1/319/alcsmisfinalrs.pdf>. Accessed July 2015.

³ Factors Affecting Wound Healing. *J Dent Res*. 2010;89(3):219-229. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2903966/>. Accessed July 2015.

⁴ Alcohol Use After Traumatic Brain Injury. Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center. <http://www.msktc.org/tbi/factsheets/Alcohol-Use-After-Traumatic-Brain-Injury>. Accessed July 2015.

⁵ Alcohol's Effects on the Body. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/alcohols-effects-body>. Accessed July 2015.



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