



Substance Use and Misuse

During your recovery from a wound, illness or injury, your doctor may prescribe medications to help prevent infection, reduce pain and improve overall healing. It is important to take these medications the right way, at the right time, for the right reason. In addition, it is important in your recovery to limit alcohol consumption and if you do choose to drink alcohol, to do so in a responsible way. Below you will information on substance misuse, addiction and the impact on your recovery.

What is substance misuse?

- Taking medication for a reason other than prescribed
- Taking medication past the prescribed date
- Taking more medication than the doctor or instructions prescribed
- Taking someone else's medications
- Excessive alcohol use



Substance misuse can lead to addiction.

What is addiction?

Addiction is dependence on a medication or substance, including alcohol. There can be an uncontrollable craving to seek and use the medication or substance. The following are some symptoms of addiction¹:

- Not consuming the substance causes cravings and makes you feel physically ill such as nausea, shaking, or sweating (withdrawal symptoms)
- You have to take more of the substance to get the same effect you previously had with smaller amounts
- Spending time and/or money (even if you can't afford it) and doing things you wouldn't normally do, such as stealing, to make sure you have the substance
- Feeling that you need the substance to deal with challenges or problems
- Participating in risky behavior while you are under the influence of the substance
- Not participating in regular or enjoyable activities because of substance use
- Continuing to use the substance even though using it has caused problems, such as blackouts



How can substance misuse affect my healing or recovery from a wound, illness, or injury?

Depending on the type of illness or injury, the effects can differ. But, substance misuse can contribute to slowed recovery, increased sensitivity to the effects of alcohol or drugs, re-injury, and engaging in risky behaviors. Additionally, alcohol and drugs can interact with each other in a dangerous way, which can cause drowsiness, decreased effectiveness of medications, concentration problems, and lightheadedness to name a few. Other potential serious consequences include hospitalization and death. Finally, substance use and misuse by those with TBI can be particularly dangerous due to increased risk of seizures, cognitive and memory issues, and increased risk of emotional problems.²

If you have questions on how to take your medications the right way or how alcohol use can interfere with your recovery, talk to your medical provider so you can avoid substance misuse and promote better healing.

For more information, visit the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center's [Wounded, Ill, and Injured Substance Use and Misuse website](#).

References

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