



# What is addiction?

When someone is addicted, we often assume it is their fault, but addiction is a complex disease affecting brain function and behavior. Substance use disorder affects the brain's ability to function normally, impacting brain processes and manifesting in uncontrollable and dangerous behavior and personality changes.

## Substance misuse impacts the brain

Substance misuse disrupts a part of the brain responsible for the “fight-or-flight” response. After substances wear off, this part of the brain creates a distress signal. This signal triggers a different part of the brain that governs self-control, decision-making and problem-solving to shut down. The result is a laser focus on replacing the missing substance.

People experiencing substance use disorder will compulsively seek substances because they need them to “survive” (according to their brain) regardless of the consequences. At this point, they're not using substances to feel good – they're using substances to feel normal.

## The good news

As with other behavior-related diseases, recovery takes time and is achieved with treatment, including therapy and sometimes medication. The good news is that since the brain is malleable, it can also heal, or recover, from the absence of the substances that caused it to change in the first place.

Substance use disorder must be managed throughout one's lifetime with proper understanding and support.

If you or someone you know is struggling with addiction, please reach out to your care team to discuss options that may be best for you.

Call your health center to make an appointment.  
[eversidehealth.com](https://www.eversidehealth.com)

**everside**  
HEALTH™