

# COMMONLY MISUSED SUBSTANCES

## The Current Landscape of Alcohol and Drug Use

Millions of people who once suffered from a substance use disorder, as well as their family and friends, have seen their lives improve through treatment and recovery. With the increasing number of online and community resources available, we all need to educate each other about how to help people in need and their families who are affected by this disease. This is the focus of this year's theme for **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)**, *"Join the Voices for Recovery: Together We Learn, Together We Heal."*

This theme emphasizes the need to use all available resources, in our communities and on the Internet, to educate people about the disease and to help those with substance use disorders, and those close to them, get support. It also celebrates the power of community support and understanding. By opening a dialogue about the harmful effects of alcohol and drug addiction on families, friends, and communities, we can provide hope, healing, and better help those struggling with substance use disorders embark on a successful journey of long-term recovery.

A substance use disorder is when a person is dependent on alcohol and/or drugs, including prescription drugs.<sup>1</sup> These disorders affect people nationwide, regardless of a person's background, race, class, gender, ethnicity, or employment status. Like other chronic diseases, substance use disorders are treatable medical conditions.<sup>2,3</sup>

While young adults aged 18 to 25 have historically experienced the highest rates of substance use, significant reductions were seen in 2007.<sup>4</sup> Young adults aged 18 to 25 experienced a decrease in cocaine use (from 2.2 percent to 1.7 percent) and methamphetamine use (from 0.6 percent to 0.4 percent) in the past year. Youths aged 12 to 17 have seen an overall decline in the rate of current (past-month) illicit drug use since 2002 (from 11.6 percent to 9.5 percent).<sup>5,6</sup>

Although positive trends in substance use are emerging, there are still areas of concern, and efforts to fight substance use disorders must continue. This includes addressing the increase in prescription pain reliever misuse among those aged 18 to 25 (to 4.6 percent in 2007) and the current use of illicit drugs among adults aged 55 to 59, which more than doubled (to 4.1 percent) since 2002.<sup>7</sup> With the variety of substances that are being misused and readily available today, including prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) remedies, raising awareness about available treatment and recovery tools can break down the barriers to treatment and influence the millions who are struggling with addiction.<sup>8</sup>

People should support recovery by increasing their awareness of the various types of substances that are commonly misused and how they affect the body. Alcohol and drug use creates chemical changes in the brain that make drug use compulsive and the cycle of addiction hard to stop.<sup>9,10</sup> When people openly discuss addiction, they can take action to help others who might be suffering and ultimately reduce the number of people who currently have an addiction. The following chart can be shared with friends, family, and other members of your community as an educational resource to demonstrate the sweeping reach of alcohol and drug use in our society today.

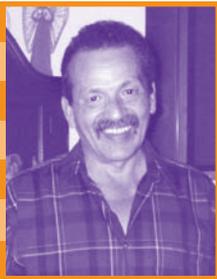
## Substance Use Disorders: A Snapshot of Addiction and Treatment in the United States<sup>11, 12, 13</sup>

Substance	Other Names <sup>14</sup>	Intoxication Effects <sup>15</sup>	Negative Health Effects <sup>16, 17</sup>	Average Age of First Use in 2007 <sup>18</sup>	Number of People Who Used it in the Past Month in 2007 <sup>19</sup>
<b>Stimulants: Affect the nervous system by increasing alertness and mental and motor activity<sup>20</sup></b>					
<b>Cocaine</b>	Coke, snow, toot, white lady, C, blow	Feelings of exhilaration, increased energy, mental alertness	Rapid or irregular heartbeat, insomnia, strokes, abdominal pain	20.2 years	2.1 million people
<b>Crack cocaine</b> (a rock-crystal form that is heated and smoked)	Rock, crack	Feelings of exhilaration, increased energy, mental alertness	Rapid or irregular heartbeat, insomnia, strokes, abdominal pain	20.2 years for cocaine	610,000 people
<b>Ecstasy (MDMA)</b>	XTC, adam, eve, decadence, M&M, X	Mild hallucinogenic effects, increased sensitivity, empathic feelings	Impaired memory and learning; sharp increase in body temperature (hyperthermia); liver, kidney, cardiovascular system failure	20.2 years	503,000 people
<b>Methamphetamine</b>	Meth, crank, speed, chalk, ice	Aggression, violence, psychotic behavior, increased physical activity	Impaired memory and learning, neurological and cardiac damage, high blood pressure, anxiety, delusions	19.1 years	529,000 people
<b>Tobacco products</b>	Cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, snuff, spit tobacco, bidis, chew	Increased adrenaline and metabolism, feelings of increased alertness and concentration	Breathing paralysis, damaged lungs and cardiovascular system, cancer, high blood pressure, pneumonia, chronic bronchitis	16.9 years for cigarette use	70.9 million people
<b>Depressants: Affect the central nervous system by decreasing awareness and capacity to function; used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders<sup>21</sup></b>					
<b>Tranquilizers</b> A class of drugs used to relax or calm, relieve anxiety, or relax muscle spasms (benzodiazepines)	Benzos (Xanax®, Ativan®, Valium®, Librium®)	Reduced anxiety, lowered inhibitions, feeling of well-being	Seizure, respiratory depression, decreased heart rate	24.5 years	1.8 million people used tranquilizers nonmedically

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Substance	Other Names <sup>22</sup>	Intoxication Effects <sup>23</sup>	Negative Health Effects <sup>24, 25</sup>	Average Age of First Use in 2007 <sup>26</sup>	Number of People Who Used it in the Past Month in 2007 <sup>27</sup>
<b>Depressants: Affect the central nervous system by decreasing awareness and capacity to function; used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders</b>					
<b>Sedatives</b> A class of drugs used to help with sleep or relaxation	Haldol®, Thorazine®, Navane®, Prolixin®, Mellaril®, Trilafon®	Reduced anxiety, lowered inhibitions, feeling of well-being	Seizure, respiratory depression, decreased heart rate, reduced mental alertness	24.2 years	346,000 people used sedatives nonmedically
<b>Alcohol</b>	Booze, sauce, drink	Reduced sensitivity to pain, taste, and odor; impaired vision; decreased attention and memory; interference with REM sleep	Damaged vital organs (such as the liver, heart, pancreas, and brain), high blood pressure, gastrointestinal irritation	16.8 years	126.8 million people
<b>Opioids: Includes drugs derived from morphine; most often prescribed to treat pain<sup>28, 29</sup></b>					
<b>Pain relievers</b> (hydrocodone, oxycodone, morphine, codeine, fentanyl)	Vike (Vicodin®), Oxy, O.C. (Oxycontin®), M (roxanol), Captain cody, Schoolboy (empirin with codeine), China white, dance fever (Actiq®)	Pain relief, feeling of sedation, euphoria, drowsiness	Seizure, respiratory depression, decreased heart rate	21.2 years	5.2 million people used pain relievers nonmedically
<b>Heroin</b>	Big H, dope, smack, white horse	Feeling of euphoria, flushing of the skin, dry mouth, feeling of heavy extremities, fluctuation between awake and drowsy states	Collapsed veins, infection of the heart lining and valves, abscesses, liver disease, pulmonary complications	21.8 years	200,000 people
<b>Cannabinoids: Hemp plant drugs made from shredded leaves, stems, seeds, and flowers<sup>30, 31</sup></b>					
<b>Marijuana</b>	Pot, weed, hash, Mary Jane, grass, reefer, ganja	Euphoria, slowed thinking and reaction time, impaired balance and coordination	Respiratory infections, increased heart rate, impaired memory, anxiety	17.6 years	14.4 million people
<b>Hallucinogens: Cause changes in a person's perception of reality<sup>32</sup></b>					
<b>LSD</b>	Acid, boomers, yellow sunshines	Altered state of perception and feeling; changes in senses, mood, body temperature	Persistent mental disorders, increased blood pressure and heart rate	18.3 years	145,000 people
<b>Inhalants: Volatile substances that produce chemical vapors that can be inhaled to induce a psychoactive, or mind-altering, effect<sup>33</sup></b>					
<b>Gases, nitrites, aerosols</b>	Ether, chloroform, nitrous oxide, isobutyl, isoamyl (poppers, snappers, whippets, laughing gas)	Stimulation, loss of inhibition, loss of motor coordination, slurred speech	Memory impairment, muscle weakness, depression, cardiovascular and nervous system damage	17.1 years	616,000 people

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**R.F. Maldonado**

I am a married Latino author and songwriter, a former teenage street-gang leader, and a former 25-year heroin/cocaine addict from New York City. Even after living a clean, sober lifestyle for the past 22 years, I am actually amazed to be here today. Nearly 99 percent of everyone I got high with growing up in New York's Spanish Harlem passed away long ago. I shared my first bottle of cheap liquor with my neighborhood friends when I was 14, and that same summer, I smoked marijuana. I immediately knew that I liked both, and that would eventually lead me to sniffing heroin at 16 and then straight into my horrible 25-year heroin/cocaine addiction.

After going to jail once or twice a year, I tried going to rehab centers, but my biggest obstacle was actually believing that I could ever change my life and world. I'd start getting high within a day or two of leaving a program. My whole world changed when I entered a 30-day, 12-step rehab program on October 14, 1986, in New York. Since then, I've been completely committed to my personal recovery. One of the many wonders has been being a pillar of strength for my family when death claimed both my sister and mom. I never even considered using those painful times as an excuse to derail my recovery and get high.

I'm very grateful to be alive and sincerely hope that the "can-do" message of my own recovery in my book, *Dancing on Broken Glass*, touches at least one life, changing it for the better. As an addict in recovery, I continue to wish to spread my genuine message of hope and recovery!

## Sustaining a Path of Recovery

The effects of substance use disorders extend beyond monetary burden, causing stress on one's family, self respect, and health. Though addiction to alcohol and/or drugs causes numerous short- and long-term health problems, it is important to recognize the power and influence of treatment and recovery support services.<sup>34</sup>

Remember that with the support of families, friends, and coworkers, and through the help of treatment, communities can assist those battling addiction and work to reduce the prevalence of alcohol and drug use. By emphasizing the value of community support, awareness, and treatment, we can improve the health and well-being of families and communities throughout the country.

In 2007, there were 23.2 million people aged 12 or older in need of treatment for an alcohol and/or drug use problem, yet only 3.9 million received some form of treatment.<sup>35</sup> More than 11,000 U.S. specialized drug treatment facilities provide rehabilitation, behavioral therapy, counseling, medications, and other types of services. Recovery can and does help people develop meaningful lifestyles and become more productive in their families, schools, workplaces, and society.<sup>36, 37</sup>

**For more resources and organizations that can help provide treatment, visit the *Recovery Month* Web site at <http://www.recoverymonth.gov>. Information on treatment options in your area and the special services available can be found at SAMHSA's "Find Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment" Web site, a portal that includes a searchable database of more than 11,000 U.S. treatment facilities and additional treatment resources. For additional *Recovery Month* materials, visit <http://www.recoverymonth.gov> or call 1-800-662-HELP.**

**Web sites or event examples mentioned in this document and on the *Recovery Month* Web site are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.**

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