

Home Care: Non-Medical, Personal Aide Services

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LIGHTHOUSE HOME CARE

Knowledge Center

As a service from us to you: we have gathered thousands of health information articles. All the articles are authoritatively sourced, constantly updated, bi-lingual, and searchable. Please come back any time you want straightforward, correct answers to health information questions.

Patient Rights

What are patient rights?

As a patient, you have certain rights. Some are guaranteed by federal law, such as the right to get a copy of your medical records and the right to keep them private and secure. Many states have additional laws protecting patients. And some states, insurance plans, medical organizations, and health care facilities have their own patient bill of rights.

Some other examples of patient rights include:

- Being treated with respect
- Not being discriminated against in your medical care
- The right to refuse treatment
- The right of informed consent

What is informed consent?

Informed consent is an important patient right. It is a process in which your health care provider gives you the information you need to make decisions about your care. The types of care could be treatments, procedures, genetic testing, or clinical trials. The information should include the risks and benefits of the care, as well as details about your medical condition.

It's important that you understand everything before you give consent. Sometimes your provider will ask you to sign a form to give your consent. This is called written consent.

You have the right to change your mind about consent at any time.

Where can I get help with patient rights?

There are different resources that can help you if you have a problem with your patient rights:

- Many hospitals have patient advocates. These are people who can help guide you through the health care system and make sure that your rights are protected.
- Your state may have resources to help you, such as:
 - Your state may have an office (called an ombudsmen office) for problems with long term care.
 - Your state's department of health may be able to help.
 - States also have oversight agencies for insurance companies and various types of health care facilities and providers. These agencies make sure that these organizations and providers follow the rules so you can get quality care.

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has an Office for Civil Rights (OCR). You can file a complaint with them if you feel you have been discriminated against in your medical care or if you think your health information privacy rights have been violated.

Prenatal Testing

What is prenatal testing?

Prenatal testing provides information about the health of your fetus before the baby is born. Some routine tests during pregnancy also check your health. The prenatal test may use a sample of your blood, urine or fluid from your vagina, cervix, or rectum.

Since some health conditions can be treated before your baby is born, it's important to find them early. But even if they cannot be treated, it can still be helpful to know about the problem early on. This gives you time to learn about the condition and prepare for any challenges you may face after the baby is born.

What is prenatal testing used to diagnose?

At your first prenatal visit, your health care provider will test for various conditions, including problems with your blood, signs of infections, and whether you are immune to rubella (German measles) and chickenpox.

Throughout your pregnancy, your provider may recommend additional tests as well. Some tests are suggested for all women, such as screenings for gestational diabetes, Down syndrome, and HIV.

Your provider might offer other tests based on your:

- Age
- Personal or family medical history
- Ethnic background
- Results of routine tests

What are the two types of prenatal tests?

There are two types of tests:

- Screening tests check if you or your fetus may have certain health issues. They look at risk but do not diagnose problems. If your screening test result is abnormal, it does not mean that there is a problem. It means that more information is needed. Your provider can explain what the test results mean and possible next steps. You may need diagnostic testing.
- Diagnostic tests help determine whether you or your fetus have a certain health problem.

It is your choice whether to get prenatal tests. You and your provider can talk about the risks and benefits of the tests, as well as the type of information they can give you. Then you can decide which ones are right for you.

National Women's Health Information Center

Drug Use and Addiction

What are drugs?

Drugs are chemical substances that can change how your body and mind work. They include prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.

What is drug use?

Drug use, or misuse, includes:

- Using illegal substances, such as:
 - Anabolic steroids
 - Club drugs
 - Cocaine
 - Heroin
 - Inhalants
 - Marijuana
 - Methamphetamines
- Misusing prescription medicines, including opioids. This means taking the medicines in a different way than your health care provider prescribed. This includes
 - Taking a medicine that was prescribed for someone else.
 - Taking a larger dose than you are supposed to.
 - Using the medicine in a different way than you are supposed to. For example, instead of swallowing your tablets, you might crush and then snort or inject them.
 - Using the medicine for another purpose, such as getting high.
- Misusing over-the-counter medicines, including using them for another purpose or in a different way than you are supposed to.

Drug use is dangerous. It can harm your brain and body, sometimes permanently. It can hurt the people around you, including friends, families, and kids. If you are pregnant, it can harm your fetus. Drug use can also lead to mild, moderate, or severe substance use disorders. Substance use disorders are sometimes called addiction.

What is drug addiction?

Drug addiction is a chronic brain disease. It causes a person to take drugs repeatedly, despite the harm they cause. Repeated drug use can change the brain and lead to addiction.

The brain changes from addiction can be lasting, so drug addiction is considered a "relapsing" disease. This means that people in recovery are at risk for taking drugs again, even after years of not taking them.

Does everyone who takes drugs become addicted?

Not everyone who uses drugs becomes addicted. Everyone's bodies and brains are different, so their reactions to drugs can also be different. Some people may become addicted quickly, or it may happen over time. Other people never become addicted. Whether or not someone becomes addicted depends on many factors. They include genetic, environmental, and developmental factors.

Who is at risk for drug addiction?

Various risk factors can make you more likely to become addicted to drugs, including:

- Your biology. People can react to drugs differently. Some people like the feeling the first time they try a drug and want more. Others hate how it feels and never try it again.
- Mental health problems. People who have untreated mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are more likely to become addicted. This can happen because drug use and mental health problems affect the same parts of the brain. Also, people with these problems may use drugs to try to feel better.
- Trouble at home. If your home is an unhappy place or was when you were growing up, you might be more likely to have a drug problem.
- Trouble in school, at work, or with making friends. You might use drugs to get your mind off these problems.
- Hanging around other people who use drugs. They might encourage you to try drugs.
- Starting drug use when you're young. When kids use drugs, it affects how their bodies and brains finish growing. This increases your chances of becoming addicted when you're an adult.

What are the signs that someone has a drug problem?

Signs that someone has a drug problem include:

- Changing friends a lot
- Spending a lot of time alone
- Losing interest in favorite things

- Not taking care of themselves - for example, not taking showers, changing clothes, or brushing their teeth
- Being very energetic, talking fast, or saying things that don't make sense
- Quickly changing between feeling bad and feeling good
- Having different eating or sleeping habits
- Missing important appointments
- Having problems at work or at school
- Having problems in personal or family relationships

What are the treatments for drug addiction?

Treatments for drug addiction include counseling, medicines, or both. Research shows that combining medicines with counseling gives most people the best chance of success.

The counseling may be individual, family, and/or group therapy. It can help you:

- Understand why the drug addiction began
- See how drugs changed your behavior
- Learn how to manage personal problems
- Learn to avoid places, people, and situations where drugs are accessible

If you stop or cut back on drugs you've used for a while, you may display different symptoms for different drugs. This is called withdrawal. Medicines can help with the symptoms of withdrawal. For addiction to certain drugs, there are also medicines that can help you re-establish normal brain function and decrease your cravings.

If you have a mental disorder along with an addiction, it is known as a dual diagnosis. It is important to treat both problems. This will increase your chance of success.

If you have a severe addiction, you may need hospital-based or residential treatment. Residential treatment programs combine housing and treatment services.

Can drug use and addiction be prevented?

Drug use and addiction are preventable. Prevention programs involving families, schools, communities, and the media may prevent or reduce drug use and addiction. These programs include education and outreach to help people understand the risks of drug use.

NIH: National Institute on Drug Abuse

Health Disparities

Health disparities are health differences between different groups of people. These health differences may include:

- How many people get certain diseases
- How severe the diseases are
- How many people have complications because of the diseases
- How many people die from a disease
- Whether people can get health care
- How many people get screened for a disease

These groups of people may be based on:

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Immigrant status
- Disability
- Sex or gender
- Sexual orientation
- Geography
- Income
- Level of education

NIH: National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities

Intimate Partner Violence

What is intimate partner violence (IPV)?

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is abuse that happens in a romantic relationship. The intimate partner could be a current or former spouse or dating partner. IPV is also known as domestic violence.

IPV can happen one time, or it may be ongoing. It may include different types of abuse, such as:

- Physical violence, which is when a person hurts or tries to hurt a partner by hitting, kicking, or using another type of physical force.
- Sexual violence which involves forcing or attempting to force a partner to take part in sexual activity when the partner does not or cannot consent. The sexual activity could include things like sex acts, sexual touching, or non-physical sexual events (e.g., sexting).
- Emotional abuse, which includes threats, name-calling, put-downs, and humiliation. It can also involve controlling behavior, such as telling a partner how to act or dress and not letting them see family or friends.
- Economic abuse, also called financial abuse, involves controlling access to money.

- Stalking, which is repeated, unwanted contact that causes fear or concern for the safety of the partner. This can include watching or following the partner. The stalker may send repeated, unwanted phone calls or texts.

Who is affected by intimate partner violence (IPV)?

It is hard to know exactly how common IPV is because it is often not reported.

But we do know that IPV can happen to anyone. It affects people with all levels of income and education.

What are the signs that someone is experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV)?

If you think that a loved one might be experiencing IPV, watch for these signs:

Does your friend or loved one:

- Have unexplained cuts or bruises?
- Avoid friends, family, and favorite activities?
- Make excuses for their partner's behavior?
- Look uncomfortable or fearful around their partner?

Does your friend or loved one's partner:

- Yell at or make fun of them?
- Try to control them by making all the decisions?
- Check up on them at work or school?
- Force them to do sexual things they don't want to do?
- Threaten to hurt themselves if the partner wants to break up?

What can I do if I am experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV)?

Your safety is the most important concern. If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

If you are not in immediate danger, you can:

- Get medical care if you have been injured or sexually assaulted.
- Call a helpline for free, anonymous help. You can contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-SAFE (7233) or 800-787-3224 (TTY). You can also chat with them through their website or through text by texting START to 88788.
- Find out where to get help in your community. Contact local organizations that can help you.
- Make a safety plan to leave. Intimate partner violence usually does not get better. Think about a safe place for you to go and all the things you will need when you leave.

- Save the evidence. Keep evidence of abuse, such as pictures of your injuries or threatening emails or texts. Make sure that it is in a safe place the abuser cannot access.
- Talk to someone you trust, such as a family member, a friend, a co-worker, or a spiritual leader.
- Consider getting a restraining order to protect yourself.

How can I help someone who is experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV)?

Let your loved one know that being treated this way isn't healthy and that they are not to blame. You should:

- Call 911 if there is immediate danger.
- Watch for the signs of abuse. Learn about the signs and keep track of the ones that you see.
- Find out about local resources. Get the addresses and phone numbers of some local resources in your community. Then, you'll be able to share the information if the person is ready for it.
- Set up a time to talk. Make sure you can have your conversation in a safe, private place. Your loved one's partner may have access to their cell phone or computer, so be careful about sharing information over text or email.
- Be specific about why you are worried. Describe the behaviors that concern you. Be as specific as possible when explaining why you are worried.
- Plan for safety. If your loved one is ready to leave an abusive partner, help them make a plan for getting out of the relationship as safely as possible. An intimate partner violence counselor can help with making a safety plan.
- Be patient and do not judge. You should talk about your concerns with your loved one, but you need to understand that they may not be ready to talk about it. Let them know that you're available to talk at any time, and that you will listen without judging them.