



SA Federation for  
Mental Health

## SUBSTANCE-RELATED AND ADDICTIVE DISORDERS

### SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

#### What it is:

Substance use disorder refers to symptoms of impaired cognitive, behavioural and psychological functioning as a direct result of the use of one or more substances. There are currently 10 substances that fall under the DSM 5 definition of substance use disorder – alcohol, cannabis, hallucinogens, caffeine, opioids, hypnotics, inhalants, stimulants, tobacco and anxiolytics. Each of these substances have potentially different effects and symptoms when taken in excess, but they all activate the reward system of the brain, making them potentially addictive.

In order to make a diagnosis, certain factors regarding the individual's substance use are considered. Substance use disorder can vary in severity from mild to severe based on the number of symptoms present.

#### Common symptoms:

1. Impaired control over substance abuse, the individual might end up taking more of the substance each time, or be unable to stop taking the substance despite multiple efforts to do so
2. The individual may spend a great deal of their time obtaining, taking or recovering from the effects of the substance
3. In severe cases the individuals daily life may revolve around the substance
4. The individual experiences intense cravings for the substance when it has not been taken
5. Social impairment occurs as a result of the use of the substance, resulting in negative outcomes in the individuals professional and personal life
6. The individual uses the substance in circumstances that are potentially hazardous or risky to their personal safety
7. The individual continues with substance use despite the knowledge of the negative physical, psychological and social effects it is having



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### **Causes:**

There may be different risk factors present for different substances. Possible risk factors include cultural attitudes towards the use of the substance, as well as the availability of the substance. Certain substance use disorders have been found to have a genetic component, as they may run in families. The presence of other mental disorders, such as mood disorders, may also increase the likelihood of an individual developing a substance use disorder.

**Remember to always consult a mental health or medical practitioner regarding any questions you may have about a mental health diagnosis and treatment options.**

This factsheet is based on information obtained from the DSM-5:  
American Psychiatric Association, 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition.*