

Substance Abuse

Questions to Ask Yourself

- What do you think about taking drugs?
- What do you think about taking nonprescription drugs?
- Have you ever heard of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome?
- Do you know anything about marijuana or depressants?
- Have you ever known someone who was negatively or positively impacted by drugs?

What is Substance Abuse?

- Substance abuse is the improper use of prescription drugs and/or alcohol or any use of illegal substances like cocaine, hallucinogens, inhalants or heroin.
- Abusing a substance can be very harmful to you and can put your pregnancy at very high risk for serious complications.

Dangers of Drugs

Any form of drug addiction is a brain disease. Even though first time use may be voluntary, drugs change genes and brain circuitry, which alters human behavior. Once addiction develops, these brain changes interfere with a person's ability to make voluntary decisions and lead to drug cravings, drug seeking and increased drug use.

Addiction to any drug may include these general characteristics:

- Feeling like one needs the drug to function, relax or have fun
- Giving up familiar activities like sports, homework or hobbies
- Sudden changes in work or school attendance and quality of work
- Adopting new habits in order to obtain drugs, like borrowing money or stealing
- Taking uncharacteristic risks like driving under the influence or risky sexual behavior
- Anger outbursts, acting irresponsibly or a dramatic change in attitude
- Deterioration of physical appearance and grooming
- Wearing sunglasses and/or long sleeves at inappropriate times
- No longer spending time with friends who don't use drugs
- Engaging in secretive behaviors like frequent trips to storage rooms or restrooms
- Needing to use more of the drug to obtain the same effects
- Talking about drugs all the time and pressuring others to use
- Feeling exhausted, depressed, hopeless or suicidal

Legal Drugs

Over the counter drugs:

Drugs that don't require a prescription, like aspirin and caffeine, have health benefits but they can be dangerous if overused.

Medications

Women should always consult their medical provider before consuming more than the recommended dosage of any drug, including drugs that are sold over the counter.

Illegal Drugs

Taking any illegal drug is a dangerous activity.

Illegal Drugs Include:

- Cocaine
- Crack
- Methamphetamine (Crystal Meth, Speed, Crank, Ice, etc.)
- Heroin
- PCP
- Marijuana
- Inhalants (Aerosols, nail polish, gasoline, etc.)

Problems Caused by Illegal Drug Use:

- Addiction
- Expensive
- Withdrawal symptoms
- Impaired judgment
- Bad "trips"
- Memory loss
- Increased heart rate
- Loss of motor skills
- Deterioration of physical appearance
- Decreased productivity at work or school
- Depression
- Mood swings
- Irregular heartbeats (which can lead to a heart attack)

Using illegal drugs can also lead to lots of trouble with the law. Factors like which drug someone is in possession of and how much determine how someone may be punished by the law in Florida. Drug use charges and penalties fit into one of the following groups:

- First Degree Misdemeanor– a fine of up to \$1000 and up to 1 year in prison.
- First Degree Felony– a fine of up to \$10,000 and up to 30 years in prison.
- Drug Trafficking– can include life in prison and a fine of up to \$500,000.

How to Quit:

There are a variety of substance abuse treatment programs available in Hillsborough County to help individuals cope with their dependence on illegal substances.

Legal Drugs

Some legal drugs can be very harmful to an unborn child. You should have your doctor's approval before taking any of these drugs while you're pregnant:

Asprin

Benefits of Aspirin:

- Reduces the risk of heart attacks and strokes
- If taken during a heart attack, increases chances of survival
- Can prevent heart disease
- Recently linked to the prevention of colon, esophagus, stomach and rectum cancer

Aspirin Risks

- Taking more than a recommended dose can make your blood dangerously thin.
- Aspirin can cause your stomach to bleed or damage stomach lining.
- On rare occasions, Aspirin has been found to cause a blood vessel in the brain to break, triggering a stroke.

Caffeine

Caffeine is a chemical agent and stimulant that your bloodstream absorbs when you eat or drink foods with caffeine. This results in an increased heart rate and heightened alertness.

Caffeine is found in:

- Coffee
- Tea
- Carbonated Sodas
- Chocolate and chocolate products (sauces, syrups, chips, candy, sprinkles, etc.)

Although Caffeine is a common drug, it should be consumed with care as it can:

- Cause your blood pressure to rise (though usually only temporarily)
- Lower bone mineral density in women
- Make it more difficult to fall and stay asleep
- Become addictive

Prescription Drugs

Prescription drugs are medicines prescribed by a doctor to treat a specific health issue for a specific amount of time. They have many benefits, like:

- Pain relief
- Making complex surgeries possible
- Enabling people with chronic health problems to lead normal lives

Although prescription drugs are legal, safe and helpful, using them in any way other than as directed by a doctor is considered drug abuse and can be dangerous or even fatal.

If you become pregnant while taking a prescription drug, you should stop taking that drug unless your doctor advises you otherwise.

Alcohol

What is alcohol?

Alcoholic beverages include a wide variety of drinks that are readily available. Some have higher alcohol content than others, but none are safe to drink excessively.

Alcoholic beverages include:

- Beer
- Hard Liquor (Rum, Vodka, Gin, etc.)
- Wine, Wine Coolers, and Champagne
- Liqueurs (Kahlua, Irish Crème, etc.)
- Mixed drinks (Rum and Coke, etc.)
- "Hard" Lemonade & Malt Beverages
- "Non-Alcoholic" Beer (it still contains alcohol)

Consuming Alcohol is risky for women.

- Body structure and chemistry cause women to absorb more alcohol and take longer to break it down and remove it than men. So, the effects of alcohol occur quicker and last longer, which weakens the women's defenses against alcohol's long-term effects.
- Drinking alcohol increases the risk of liver disease, infertility, brain shrinkage, heart damage, breast cancer and sexual assault.
- Alcohol suppresses the part of the brain that controls judgment, resulting in a loss of inhibitions, physical coordination, blurred vision, slurred speech and loss of balance.

Excessive drinking has been linked to:

- Vitamin deficiency
- Sexual problems
- Muscle disease
- Obesity
- Infertility
- Skin problems
- Inflammation of the pancreas

Cutting Down

If you think you might be drinking too much, try keeping a "drinking diary" to keep track of how much you