

# 7 Ways to Tell If Your Loved One Has an Addiction

## ... and what you can and can't do about it

Identifying an addiction in a loved one and talking with them about it are two very complex and difficult things to do. What follows are brief tips about identifying and confirming the problem and what you can (and can't) do to help.

### 1. Trust your gut.

When observing a spouse, relative, or friend, look for certain telltale signs of addiction.

Signs of Addiction	Alcohol Addiction	Chemical Addiction
<b>Tries to hide use of alcohol or chemicals</b>	✓	✓
<b>Is unable to limit the amount</b>	✓	✓
<b>Gets irritable if not using</b>	✓	✓
<b>Has undergone a change in personality and behavior</b>	✓	✓
<b>Isolates</b>	✓	✓
<b>Denies that there is a problem</b>	✓	✓
<b>Gives up important work or personal activities in favor of the addiction</b>	✓	✓
<b>Has increased the amount and frequency of use</b> (indicates a buildup in tolerance)	✓	✓
<b>Is experiencing new physical or psychological problems</b>	✓	✓
<b>Doesn't remember conversations or commitments</b>	✓	✓
<b>Becomes drunk intentionally to feel "normal"</b>	✓	✓
<b>Loses interest in activities that used to be important</b>	✓	✓
<b>Has shallow breathing</b>		✓
<b>Itches skin</b>		✓
<b>Is constipated</b>		✓
<b>Has needle marks on skin</b>		✓
<b>Changes doctors or pharmacies to get pills</b>		✓

### 2. Watch for withdrawal symptoms.

People with an addiction sometimes try to stop on their own. If so, you'll see signs of withdrawal and patterns of reuse. Sometimes medical monitoring is needed for withdrawal.

Type of Addiction	Most Common Symptoms
<b>Opioid</b>	Anxiety, increased tear production, runny nose, hot and cold sweating, yawning, anxiety and agitation, insomnia, abdominal cramping, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
<b>Benzodiazepine</b> (anxiety and sleeping medication)	Seizures, mania, schizophrenia, double or blurred vision, panic attacks, dizziness, rapid blinking of eyes, sharp throbbing pain in wrists, tiny pupils, impotence, dry mouth, restless legs, skin blotches
<b>Alcohol</b>	Anxiety, emotional volatility, depression, shakiness, rapid heartbeat, seizures, fever, severe confusion, hallucinations

### 3. Stay detached, but with love.

When dealing with a loved one's addiction, remember this: You didn't cause it, you can't control it, and you can't cure it. You can address the issue of addiction with your loved one but any behavior change is up to them.

### 4. Consider mental health.

About 8.9 million persons have co-occurring disorders; they have both a mental health and a substance use disorder. The relationship between the two is complex and the treatment is difficult. Medical doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and drug and alcohol counselors must work as a team to unravel and diagnose the problem and define the treatment.

### 5. Don't judge.

Addiction is a disease. If the addicted person had a heart attack, would you stand back and blame them for their diet or lack of exercise or weight control? Most likely, you would rush to help. Alcohol and drug dependence is just like diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. It's just as life-threatening if left untreated.

### 6. Begin the conversation and keep expectations low.

It's hard to know what to do or say, but the stakes are high—you may literally be saving a life. Remember these guidelines:

Do...	Don't...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bring up the issue when the person is sober</li><li>Express your concern in a caring and honest way</li><li>Talk about the effect the drinking or drug use has had on whatever he or she cares most about: career, children, sports, physical health</li><li>Have a support person with you or available by phone</li><li>Write down what you want to say ahead of time so you're prepared</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bring up the issue when the person is drunk or high</li><li>Use a blaming tone</li><li>Offer solutions; you are not a chemical dependency professional</li><li>Try to change behaviors</li><li>Do this alone</li><li>Despair or take it personally if the conversation ends badly; you have planted a seed of recovery that may grow when you least expect it</li></ul>

### 7. When your loved one is open to professional help, start with a professional assessment

Hazelden and other addiction treatment centers have professional staff who conduct individual screening assessments to determine whether someone has an addiction. A professional assessment is the best way to clinically assess the problem, establish the facts, and determine what treatment will help lead to recovery and sobriety.

Hazelden Betty Ford

**Patient Care Network**  
Member

Palomar Health is a collaborating member of the Hazelden Betty Ford Patient Care Network.

Visit [PalomarHealth.org/RecoveryCenter](http://PalomarHealth.org/RecoveryCenter) to learn more or call XXX-XXX-XXXX.

### Set Boundaries

"Once you have determined there is a problem set clear expectations and boundaries; while you can't force anyone to do something they don't want to do, you can control what happens in your home and how someone treats you. Your willingness to set firm boundaries significantly improves the outcome and stabilizes the home and family. Stay the course."

—William Coleman  
Clinical Director

### REACH OUT TODAY. WE'RE HERE FOR YOU.

Call **800-257-7800** to speak confidentially to a recovery expert or visit [HazeldenBettyFord.org](http://HazeldenBettyFord.org) to learn more.

Check your benefits. Treatment services are covered by insurance for most of our patients.

The Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, a national nonprofit organization founded in 1949, is a force of healing and hope for individuals, families and communities affected by addiction to alcohol and other drugs.