

## Glossary and Definitions

### Data and Analysis Workgroup of the Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

**Addiction:** A chronic, relapsing disease characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite serious adverse consequences, and by long-lasting changes in the brain.

**Agonist:** A chemical entity that binds to a receptor and activates it, mimicking the action of the natural (or abused) substance that binds there.

**Antagonist:** A chemical entity that binds to a receptor and blocks its activation. Antagonists prevent the natural (or abused) substance from activating its receptor.

**Barbiturate:** A type of CNS depressant prescribed to promote sleep (usually in surgical procedures) or as an anticonvulsant. An example of a barbiturate is phenobarbital.

**Benzodiazepine:** A type of CNS depressant prescribed to relieve anxiety and sleep problems. Diazepam (Valium™) and alprazolam (Xanax™) are among the most widely prescribed medications in this class.

**Buprenorphine:** A mixed opiate agonist/antagonist medication which is effective for the treatment of opioid addiction (e.g., addiction to heroin and pharmaceutical opioids). Buprenorphine is combined with naloxone in Suboxone™ film and Zubsolv™ to prevent people from injecting it since the naloxone can cause uncomfortable withdrawal feelings when injected.

**Comorbidity:** The occurrence of two disorders or illnesses in the same person, also referred to as co-occurring conditions or dual diagnoses. Patients with comorbid illnesses may experience a more severe illness course and require treatment for each or all conditions.

**Detoxification:** A process in which the body rids itself of a drug (or its metabolites). During this period, withdrawal symptoms can emerge that may require medical treatment. This may be a step in the treatment of substance use disorders.

**Drug-defined offenses:** Violations of laws prohibiting or regulating the possession, distribution, or manufacture of illegal drugs.

**Drug trafficking:** Manufacturing, distributing, selling, smuggling, and possession with intent to sell.

**Drug possession:** Possession of an illegal drug, but excludes possession with intent to sell. It also includes offenses involving drug paraphernalia and forged or unauthorized prescriptions.

**Drug-related criminal offenses:** Offenses in which drug's pharmacologic effects contribute; offenses are motivated by the user's need for money to support continued use; and offenses connected to drug distribution itself.

**Illicit drugs:** Also known as illegal drug use, illicit drug use occurs when the substances used are not legal (e.g., heroin), legal substances are used for an improper purpose (e.g. sleeping pills to get high or pain pills for relaxation), or a product or substance not intended to be a drug is used in a way which produces a drug like state (e.g. inhalants).

**Methadone:** A long-acting synthetic opioid medication that is effective in treating opioid addiction and pain.

**Opioid:** A compound or drug that binds to receptors in the brain involved in the control of pain and other functions. Examples include morphine, heroin, hydrocodone, and oxycodone.

**Overdose:** When a drug is eaten, inhaled, injected, or absorbed through the skin in excessive amounts and injures the body. Overdoses are either intentional or unintentional. If the person taking or giving a substance did not mean to cause harm, then it is unintentional.

**Physical Dependence:** An adaptive physiological state that occurs with regular drug use and results in a withdrawal syndrome when drug use is stopped; often occurs with tolerance. Physical dependence can happen with chronic—even appropriate—use of many medications, and by itself does not constitute addiction.

**Accidental Poisoning:** accidental overdose of drug, wrong drug given or taken in error, and drug taken inadvertently; accidents in the use of drugs, medications and biological substances in medical and surgical procedures; self-inflicted poisoning, when not specified whether accidental or with intent to harm.

**Poisoning: Intentional self-poisoning:** purposely self-inflicted poisoning or injury; suicide; injuries in suicide and attempted suicide; self-inflicted injuries specified as intentional.

**Polydrug Abuse:** The abuse of two or more drugs at the same time, such as opioids and alcohol.

**Non-medical Prescription Drug Use:** The use of a medication without a prescription; in a way other than as prescribed; or for the experience or feeling elicited. This term is used interchangeably with "nonmedical" use, a term employed by many of the national surveys.

**Psychotherapeutics:** Drugs that have an effect on the function of the brain and that often are used to treat psychiatric/neurologic disorders; includes opioids, CNS depressants, and stimulants.

**Relapse:** Returning to drug or substance use after a period of abstinence or after treatment for a use disorder.

**Respiratory Depression:** Slowing of respiration (breathing) that results in the reduced availability of oxygen to vital organs. Opioids can cause respiratory depression.

**Sedatives:** Drugs that suppress anxiety and promote sleep; the classification used by the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) includes benzodiazepines, barbiturates, and other types of CNS depressants.

**Substance Use Disorder** (according to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fifth Edition [DSM-5]): The essential feature of a substance use disorder is a cluster of cognitive, behavioral, and physiological symptoms indicating that the individual continues using the substance despite significant substance-related problems. The diagnosis of a substance use disorder is applied to different substance classes (alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, hallucinogens, inhalants, opioids, sedatives, stimulants, and other). There are 11 diagnostic criteria that are based on a pathological pattern of behaviors related to use of the substance and fall within the overall groupings of impaired control, social impairment, risky use, and physiological criteria (i.e. tolerance and withdrawal).

**Stimulants:** A class of drugs that enhances the activity of monamines (such as dopamine) in the brain, increasing arousal, heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration, and decreasing appetite; includes some medications used to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (e.g., methylphenidate and amphetamines), as well as cocaine and methamphetamine.

**Tolerance:** A condition in which higher doses of a drug are required to produce the same effect achieved during initial use; often associated with physical dependence.

**Withdrawal:** Symptoms that occur after chronic use of a drug is reduced abruptly or stopped. For example, withdrawal from opioids may cause abdominal cramping, muscle aches and diarrhea.

Adapted from Glossary: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/prescription-drugs/glossary>, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) , <http://www.bjs.gov/> and ICD9 and ICD10 codes

For more information please go to Frequently Asked Questions from NIDA:  
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/frequently-asked-questions#addiction>