



Malton Women Council

ADDICTIONS TIP SHEET



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What is an Addiction?

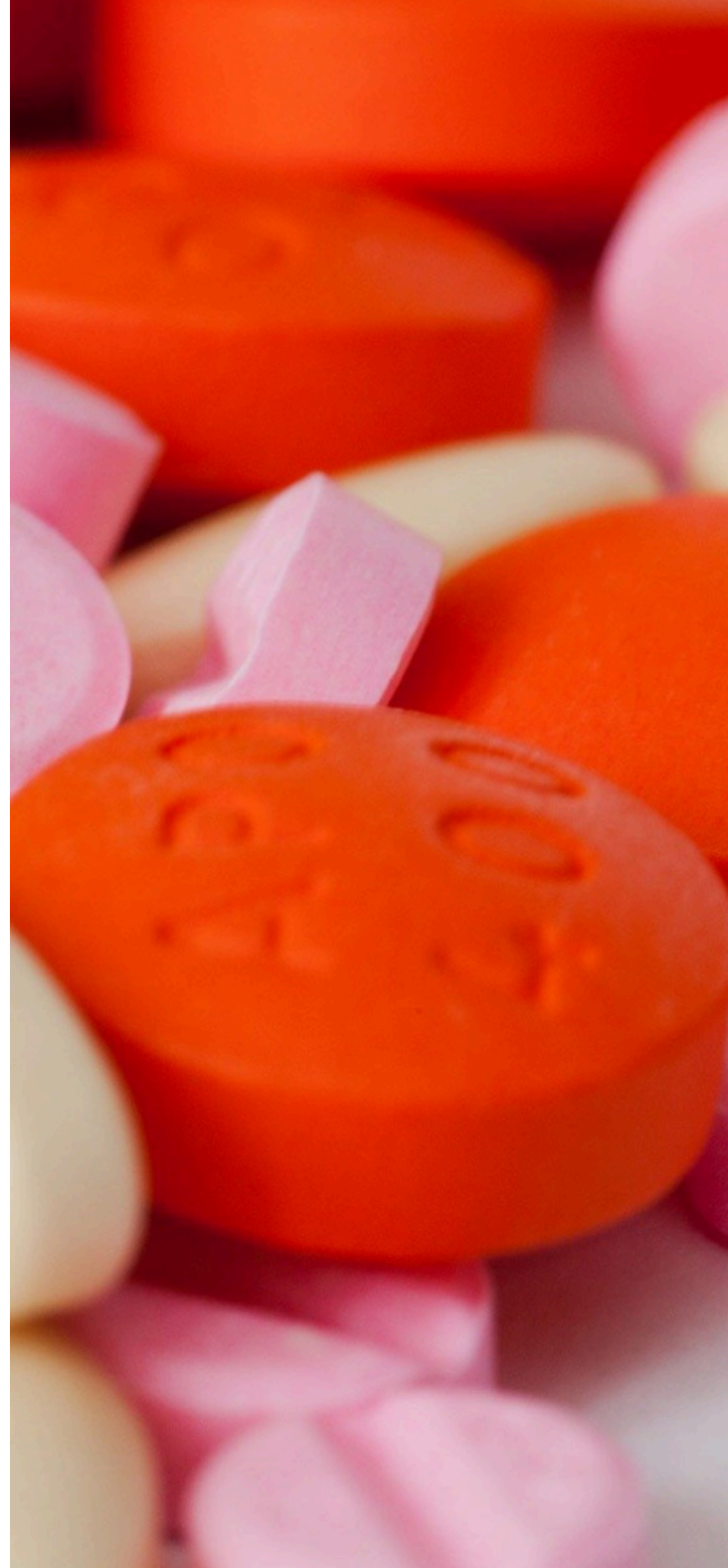
Addiction refers to the problematic use of a substance like alcohol. A person who is addicted may experience craving, loss of control of the amount or frequency of use, compulsion to use, and use despite consequences.

- Substance use can lead to harms such as injury while under the influence, problems with relationships, excessive spending on substances rather than daily essentials, feelings of anxiety, depression, irritability, or emptiness.





- There are also non-substance (behavioral) addictions. Currently, only gambling is recognized as a diagnosed behavioral addiction. However, other addictive activities may include eating, exercising, shopping, pornography, video gaming, using the internet, etc. Similar to substances, these activities can influence your brain's reward system, making you want to keep engaging in them.





Causes and Risk Factors

- Genetic predisposition. You may be more likely to develop a substance use disorder if your first-degree relative also has this disorder.
- Home and community environment. For example, poverty, family conflict, and drug use among peers can cause one to begin using drugs to cope.
- Mental Health Issues, such as anxiety, depression, and bipolar disorder, may have links with substance use disorders.



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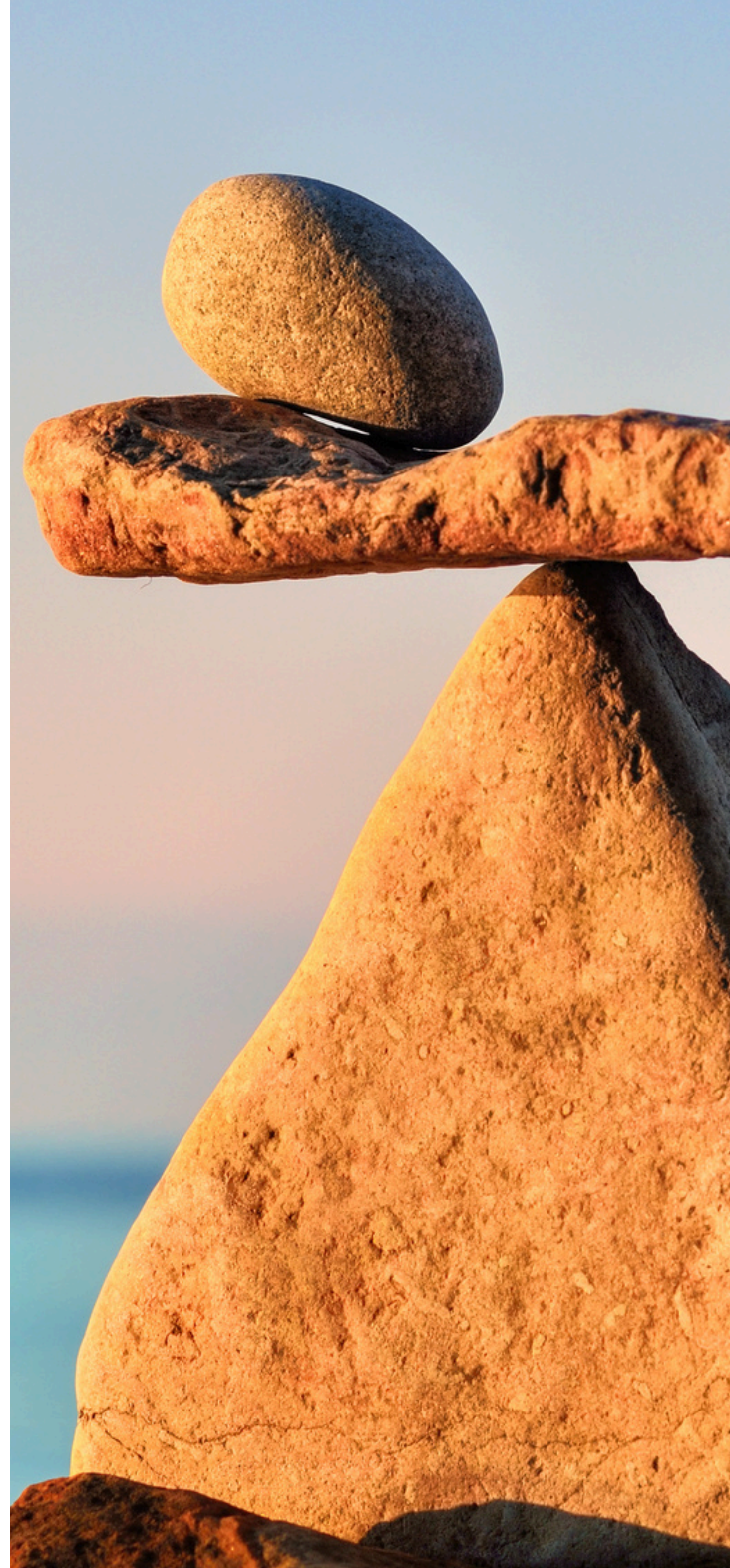
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- To feel good and cope with difficult emotions. Substances send large amounts of dopamine (a feel-good chemical) to your brain. This can make you want to keep doing the activity that brings you pleasure. Typically, your brain will release dopamine when you engage in healthy behaviors such as talking to a loved one. This will make you feel good. However, substances can damage your brain. Over time, you may need more of a substance to obtain the same pleasurable feeling.





Symptoms of Addiction

- Inability to stop using a substance despite making attempts.
- Increased tolerance. This means that you need to take more of a substance to get the same happy feeling.
- Intense focus on the substance or activity. This involves spending time craving, thinking, and obtaining the substance. It takes over your life.
- Personal Problems and Health Issues. The addiction may affect your ability to fulfill your family, work, and school responsibilities. Despite knowing this, you may not be able to stop.
- Withdrawal Symptoms. If you stop using the substance, you may experience symptoms like shaking, sweating, vomiting, anxiety, etc.





Treatment

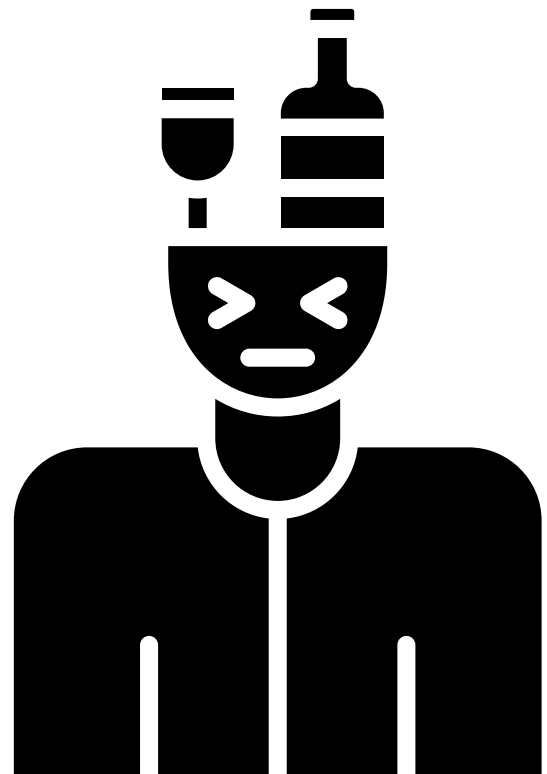
- Medication. Medication can help reduce urges, cravings, and symptoms.
- Psychotherapy. Therapy can help you explore your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors around the addiction.
- Self-help. Books and support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous can provide you with the support of peers who are undergoing the same experiences as you.





- **Harm Reduction.** Harm Reduction helps people who are not able or willing to give up substances. Harm reduction strategies include helping people learn safer ways to use substances, providing clean needles for injection drug use to prevent transmission of infections through needle sharing, and substituting a drug for a safer drug.
- **Alcohol and Drug Education.** Learning more about your addiction can help you better manage and act.

- Rehabilitation. Rehab is also known as residential treatment, where you receive counselling, education, support, and encouragement to manage the addiction.
- Other supports and services. Services such as support with education, employment, food, and housing are important to manage addictions. Challenges in these areas can arise both as a cause and a consequence of addictions.

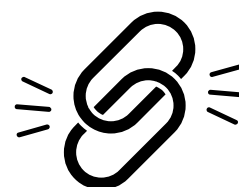




Resources

If you or someone you know is struggling with an addiction, make use of the following resources:

- Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS) (905) 677-0889
<https://pchs4u.com/>
- Breakaway Community Services 416-537-9346
<https://breakawaycs.ca/>
- Toronto Alcoholics Anonymous <https://www.aatoronto.org/>
- Connex Ontario 1-866-531-2600 <https://connexontario.ca/>
for help finding addiction, mental health, and gambling
treatment services.



References

- CAMH <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/addiction>
- Cleveland Clinic
<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/6407-addiction>

