

# Breaking Unhealthy Habits: Tobacco, Marijuana, and Opioid Awareness and Addiction

Jennifer Mendez, LPN







# What is an addiction?

- Addiction is a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences. People with addiction use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive despite harmful consequences.



# What is Tobacco?

*Nicotiana tabacum* is a very pretty plant that widely grows in the United States and China, but when fermented it becomes highly toxic to your health. Tobacco smoke contains nicotine, carbon monoxide, tar, benzene, arsenic, and formaldehyde.

- Benzene- is commonly found in crude oil, and is used to make plastics, resins, dyes, and pesticides.
- Arsenic- is used in processing glass, dyes, metal adhesives, and ammunition.
- Formaldehyde- is found in pressed wood, foam, insulation, wallpaper, and paints.

Nicotine is a natural property of many plants, but the *nicotiana* plant contains large amounts.

Nicotine itself is not toxic.





# Nicotine



- **Nicotine** is both a stimulant and a depressant to the central nervous system. When ingested it triggers the brain to release the hormone epinephrine. Epinephrine then triggers the brain to release dopamine, which gives off a pleasurable response. Almost like a feeling of euphoria. This feeling initiates the addictive properties.

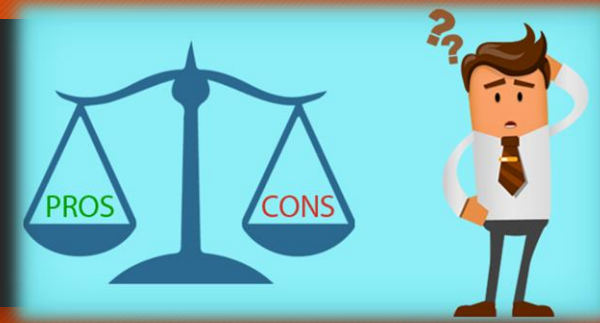
# Tobacco Products

- Tobacco use can be dated back almost 8000 years. Cigarettes were created in the early 1900s. However, tobacco was primarily used in pipes, cigars, and chewing and snuff (dry tobacco used for inhaling).





# Smoking... Why do we do it?



Just like any situation, let us analyze.

## My Pros

Smoking is used as an anti-stressor or anti-depressant. “It helps me relax”, “It makes me feel better”.

Smoking is used as an appetite suppressor. “Smoking makes me lose weight”, “Smoking stops me from eating all day”.

Smoking is an ice breaker, it is used to socialize. “I need a cigarette to fit in”, “I’m gonna go smoke with my friends”.

Smoking has health benefits. “I heard smoking can lower my blood pressure”.

## My Cons

Lung Cancer. A most common cause of death among smokers.

Lung Diseases. The most common lung diseases for smokers include emphysema, COPD and, Chronic Bronchitis.

Significant loss of taste and smell.

Lowers the possibility of women getting pregnant. Lower birth weight of children born to smoking mothers.

The smell of cigarette smoke lingers.

Very Expensive.

# Who smokes?

- In the United States alone, there are about 30 million people who smoke.
- On average children experiment with tobacco at the age of 12 years old.
- Generally, men are more prone to use tobacco products.



# Effects of smoking first hand, second hand, third hand.

## First-Hand Smoke

- Cancer
- Heart Disease
- Stroke
- Lung Diseases
- Blindness
- 480,000 deaths per year



## Second-Hand Smoke

- 34,000 deaths per year
- Side Stream Smoke contains over 7,000 chemicals
- Side Stream Smoke contains about 70 carcinogens.
- Can cause cancer.
- Can contribute to SIDS.
- Increases the risks of stroke, and heart disease.



## Third-Hand Smoke

- Is made up of the pollutants that settle indoors when tobacco is smoked.
- Sticks to walls, carpets, clothing, and furniture.
- Contains carcinogens and other toxic chemicals.
- Remains on surfaces for months.
- More dangerous to children (especially those who crawl), and pets.



# Effects of Tobacco during Pregnancy

- Nicotine restricts oxygen and blood flow to the fetus
- Increases risk of miscarriage and premature birth
- Higher chance of low birth weight and stillbirth
- Can lead to birth defects and developmental delays
- Babies may experience withdrawal symptoms after birth
- Long-term risks: asthma, learning and behavior problems



# How do I stop using tobacco?

- The first major step is making the choice to quit!!
- Come to terms that quitting is a process, it doesn't always happen over night.
- Coming to terms with the fact that you may relapse, and may use tobacco again.
- Realize that you are a person, you are an individual, and you are entitled to start over again and again.
- Make a list on your reasons for quitting.
- Tell your loved ones that you plan on quitting.
- Pick a date on when you want to quit.



# Tools For Quitting



- Nicotine Replacement Aids:

Gums, Patches, Nasal Sprays, Inhalers, and Lozenges. These aid in providing the user with small amounts of nicotine to help with smoking withdrawals. The amounts are slowly lessened until you are completely weaned off. No prescription is needed, they can be bought in the pharmacies and NYC offers nicotine replacement products free of charge if you call 311.

- Prescription Smoking Cessation Aids:

Prescribed medication such as Chantix, and Zyban. Neither medication contain nicotine. They inhibit the neurotransmitters in the brain to either make smoking pleasurable, or to inhibit the symptoms of withdrawal.



# Non-pharmaceutical Tools

- Avoid common triggers or habits.
- Delay your usual smoking time.
- Exercise also releases dopamine. Get active!
- Try meditation or other relaxation techniques.
- Try chewing gum or eating sunflower seeds to help with the habit.
- Find a support group.
- Remind yourself why you chose to quit.



# Sources for smoking cessation.

- Contact 311 for direct connection to the smoking cessation hotline, call 866-NYQUITS, or [www.nysmokefree.com](http://www.nysmokefree.com).
- American Lung Association ([www.lung.org](http://www.lung.org))
- American Heart Association ([www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org))
- Center for Disease Control Tobacco Portal ([www.cdc.gov/tobacco](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco))
- Call 800-QUITNOW is a national hotline to help with resources in any state.
- Talk to your physician





# Marijuana



- Marijuana is made from the flower of the Cannabis Sativa plant. This flower is consumed in many ways including smoking, eating, drinking, or topical.
- Marijuana was legalized in NYC for recreational use in 2021. Since then there have been a rise in the use of marijuana in the city.
- Marijuana is legal however there are some rules regarding its use:

It is illegal to use marijuana while in a car even if it is parked, in parks, beaches and boardwalks, public gardens, schools, restaurants, and bars.

- While it is not particularly illegal to smoke or consume marijuana around your children, parents should be mindful to store and keep it out of reach of children. Be mindful that marijuana smoke can irritate the lungs of children, and children can have residual effects of the second hand smoke.
- Marijuana use is said to have effects on your immediate health including anxiety, fast heart rate, nausea/ vomiting, slower reactions and altered perceptions, and breathing issues.
- Studies conducted show that there is a higher risk of car crashes, and early onset of psychotic disorders for those who are already at risk.
- Smoking while pregnant can lead to low birth rates and disruption of brain development, as well as behavior or attention difficulties later in childhood.

# Marijuana Cont.

- Marijuana has been used for medicinal purposes legally in NYC since 2016.
- Marijuana use has been said to help with chronic pain, chemotherapy-induced nausea, and multiple sclerosis muscle stiffness.





# Effects of Marijuana use during Pregnancy

- THC crosses the placenta and affects fetal brain development
- May lead to low birth weight and premature delivery
- Increases risk of stillbirth
- Can affect baby's attention, memory, and behavior later in life
- Linked to developmental delays and learning problems
- May impact the baby's sleep patterns and feeding after birth

# Marijuana Use Safety

- Avoid using various drugs at the same time.
- Be watchful of synthetic marijuana such as K2, that can have harmful effects.
- Keep cannabis out of the reach of minors. Children have mistakenly eaten cannabis that resembles food. If you have edibles in your home, keep them separate from other food and beverages. Keep all cannabis products in a secure place that cannot be seen or accessed by people younger than 21.
- If a child mistakenly eats anything containing cannabis, call the NYC Poison Control Center at 212-POISONS (212-764-7667).
- Its important to recognize symptoms of cannabis poisoning, such as loss of coordination, excessive sleepiness and trouble breathing. Severe poisoning can lead to a coma or even a need for a ventilator



# Alcohol Use



- Alcohol addiction, also known as Alcohol Use Disorder or AUD, is a chronic condition where a person can't control their drinking despite negative consequences. It affects brain chemistry, decision-making, emotions, and physical health. Like other chronic diseases, it often requires ongoing treatment and support.

# Why do some people drink alcohol?

People may drink excessively for a variety of emotional, psychological, and social reasons. Some common causes include:

- **Stress or Anxiety**: Alcohol can provide temporary relief from stress, anxiety, or overwhelming emotions, leading people to use it as a coping mechanism.
- **Depression or Mental Health Issues**: Individuals struggling with depression or trauma may turn to alcohol to numb emotional pain.
- **Peer Pressure or Social Norms**: Drinking is often normalized in social settings, and people may feel pressure to drink heavily to fit in or have fun.
- **Family History or Genetics**: A family history of alcohol addiction can increase the risk due to both genetic and environmental influences.
- **Escape or Avoidance**: Some people drink to escape personal problems, responsibilities, or difficult life circumstances.
- **Tolerance and Dependence**: Over time, the body builds tolerance, leading people to drink more to feel the same effects, which can spiral into addiction.



# Signs of Alcohol Addiction



- Alcohol addiction shows up in many ways. People may have intense cravings, drink more than intended, or continue drinking despite problems. Physical withdrawal symptoms can be severe. Over time, alcohol damages the liver, heart, and brain and increases the risk of mental health disorders.

## Signs and Symptoms of Alcohol Dependence include:

- Craving alcohol, loss of control in withholding from drinking
- Withdrawal symptoms: shaking, nausea, sweating when not drinking
- Risky behaviors, neglecting responsibilities

# Effects of Alcohol Abuse during Pregnancy

- Alcohol use during pregnancy is extremely dangerous. There is no known safe amount. It can cause miscarriage or premature birth. Babies exposed to alcohol in the womb may develop Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, which include a range of physical, behavioral, and learning problems that can last a lifetime.
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs) are a group of conditions that can occur in a child exposed to alcohol before birth.

They can lead to:

- Physical differences (e.g., small head size, facial features)
- Learning disabilities, memory problems
- Speech delays and motor skill issues
- Behavioral problems like impulsivity or poor social judgment



# Alcohol Recovery

- The good news is that recovery is very possible. Treatment options include counseling, medications, and support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous. Early help can prevent long-term damage. Support from family, friends, and the community plays a huge role in a person's journey to healing

# Opioid Use



- According to NYS Comptroller in 2021, 30 New Yorkers per 100,000 died from drug overdoses; 25 per 100,000 New Yorkers died from opioid overdoses in that year. New York's opioid overdose death rates have been rising yearly.
- Opioid use disorder (OUD) is a complex illness characterized by compulsive use of opioid drugs even when the person wants to stop, or when using the drugs negatively affects the person's physical and emotional well-being.
- Opioids are a class of drugs that include synthetic opioids such as fentanyl; pain relievers that require a prescription, such as OxyContin, Vicodin, codeine, and morphine; and the illegal drug heroin.
- Opioid addiction is common, especially with prescription medications, and can be helped. Addiction is a diagnosed medical condition and can be treated. If you or anyone you know needs help with Opioid addiction, please call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at 1-800-662-4357 for confidential free help.



# Effects of Opioid Use during Pregnancy

- Opioids cross the placenta and affect fetal development
- Increases risk of premature birth, low birth weight, and stillbirth
- Can cause birth defects and poor fetal growth
- May lead to **Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)** — withdrawal symptoms in newborns
- Long-term risks: developmental delays, learning and behavior problems
- Misuse or sudden stopping can be dangerous — medical guidance is essential

## Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) :

is a condition that occurs in newborns who were exposed to addictive drugs, especially opioids, while in the womb.

### Common Symptoms Include:

- Tremors or shaking, Excessive crying and irritability, Poor feeding or sucking, Sleep problems, Vomiting or diarrhea, and Seizures (in severe cases).

# Signs of Opioid Overdose



SMALL, CONSTRICTED  
'PINPOINT PUPILS'



FALLING ASLEEP OR  
LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS



CHOKING OR  
GURGLING SOUNDS



A LIMP BODY



PALE, BLUE  
OR COLD SKIN



SHALLOW BREATHING  
OR NO BREATHING

IF YOU SUSPECT AN  
OVERDOSE CALL 911

NARCAN CAN ALSO HELP  
STOP AN OVERDOSE



# Naloxone (Narcan)

- Naloxone is a safe medication that can save someone's life by reversing the effects of an opioid overdose. It only works on opioids, such as heroin, prescription painkillers and fentanyl, but it is safe to use even if opioids are not present. People who use Narcan on a person is protected by the Good Samaritan Act.
- You can get an Emergency Overdose Rescue Kit for free from participating pharmacies, at public health vending machines, and by participating in a virtual workshop conducted by the NYC Department of Health. The next workshop is on March 13<sup>th</sup>.
- The Williamsburg Y Head Start has an Emergency Overdose Rescue Kit in house, and is authorized to use it on any person who is suspected of having an opioid overdose.





When you are ready to quit remind yourself that it is possible!



