



# The Truth About Opioid Addiction

Answers About Opioid Addiction and Treatment

# Table of Contents

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| What is addiction?.....                       | <b>3</b> |
| How does addiction affect a life? .....       | <b>3</b> |
| How can I help someone with addiction? .....  | <b>4</b> |
| Is there treatment for addiction?.....        | <b>4</b> |
| Levels of treatment .....                     | <b>4</b> |
| Treatment approaches.....                     | <b>4</b> |
| Questions to ask when seeking treatment ..... | <b>5</b> |
| Resources in Hampton Roads.....               | <b>6</b> |
| Additional resources .....                    | <b>7</b> |



# What is Addiction?



Addiction is a chronic, relapsing brain disease. It features a lessened ability to abstain (stop), which leads to a lack of behavioral control and dysfunctional emotional responses.

## How does addiction affect a life?

Just as a disease of the heart affects normal functions such as doing physical activity, addiction affects normal brain function. With addiction, the brain changes physically and that affects judgment, decision making, controlling behaviors, and memory. It has serious consequences; yet it is treatable.

Addiction to opioids (i.e. prescription pain pills, heroin) is associated with a stigma that leads people away from treatment. Reducing stigma by using non-judgmental language such as “a person with a substance use disorder (SUD)” is less stigmatizing than saying “an addict”.

# How Can I Help?

Friends and family members are an important motivator. Some ways to help are:

- Be supportive, listen.
- Speak with them in a respectful way that's destigmatizing.
- Assist them in finding help, share the resources in this guide.

## Is there treatment for addiction?

Yes, there are different levels of treatment based on a person's individual needs as well as different approaches to treatment.

### LEVELS OF TREATMENT

**Medically Managed Intensive Inpatient Services:** For patients with multiple psychiatric and medical issues and in need of intensive treatment for withdrawal. This is for those who have a low interest in treatment and poor impulse control.


**Inpatient or Residential Services:** Provides a controlled living environment with social support to enhance recovery. This level is for those who may be ambivalent or need motivation in engagement of treatment.

**Intensive Outpatient/Partial Hospitalization:** For those who are unable to complete an inpatient or residential program but would benefit from daily treatment including education, group therapy and individual therapy several hours per day.

**Outpatient Treatment:** Provides individual and group therapy typically twice per week. This is the lowest level of care for those ready to change and with a supportive at home environment.

### TREATMENT APPROACHES

**Behavioral Therapy:** Modifies attitudes and gives skills to handle stressful cues that trigger cravings and prompt use. Studies show behavioral therapy helps people remain in treatment longer.



**Medication Assisted Treatment:** Also referred to as MAT, treats withdrawal symptoms, helps people focus on counseling and controls cravings.

**Combination:** Studies show use of MAT along with behavioral therapy can be more effective than either individually.

**12-step programs:** Enhance and extend professional treatment

**Tidewater Area Narcotics Anonymous**

[tidewaterareana.org](http://tidewaterareana.org)

**Alcoholics Anonymous**

*(supports those seeking help for addiction with other substances, not just alcohol)*

[aa.org](http://aa.org)

## Questions to Ask When Seeking Treatment

**Does the program tailor treatment based on an individual's needs?**

Yes, treatment often requires managing other medical conditions, family therapy, and parental support, social and legal services.

**Is treatment based on scientific research?**

Yes, new treatments are always developing and improving.

**Is treatment adjusted based on progress and changing needs?**

Yes, a person's needs change as recovery progresses. Treatment must be adjusted for lapses or relapses. A lapse or relapse does NOT equal failure.

**How long is treatment?**

Length of treatment is determined based on severity and type of addiction.

# There is always hope!

## Community Services Boards

Local cities provide programs and services for those who are suffering with addiction. Use this link to find a local CSB: <https://vacsb.org/csb-bha/director/>

## Warm Lines

Warm lines offer peer support to local communities. These are non-crisis hotlines that are run by professionally trained peers.

Norfolk Community Services Board:

**757.664.6683**

Portsmouth BHS: **757.381.5289**

Virginia Beach Community Service Board:  
**757.402.6190**

## PROUD Program

*(Prevention and Recovery from Opioid Use Disorder)*

Chesapeake Regional Medical Center will see anyone who is seeking help from opioid addiction. The program starts patients on medication, if applicable, in the emergency department and connects them to follow up care in the community.

<https://chesapeakeregional.com/services-specialiteis/behavioral-health/opioid-use-disorder>.

# Additional Resources

## Local

### EVMS Resource Guide



## National Organizations

### Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

[www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov)

1-800-662-HELP

### The Patient Referral Program on American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry website: [aaap.org/patient-referral-program](http://aaap.org/patient-referral-program)

### NIDA's Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research Based Guide

[drugabuse.gov/PODAT/PODATIndex.html](http://drugabuse.gov/PODAT/PODATIndex.html)

Reaching out to a local church may also provide direction and help for families.



**EVMS**  
Eastern Virginia Medical School

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