Substance Abuse

Your exam indicates that you have a problem with substance abuse. Substance abuse is the misuse of alcohol or drugs that causes problems in family life, friendships, and work relationships. **Substance abuse is the most important cause of premature illness, disability, and death in our society**. It is also the greatest threat to a person's mental and spiritual well being.

Substance abuse can start out in an innocent way, such as social drinking or taking a little extra medication prescribed by your doctor. No one starts out with the intention of becoming an alcoholic or an addict. **Substance abuse victims cannot control their use of alcohol or drugs**. They may become intoxicated daily or go on weekend binges. Often there is a strong desire to quit, but attempts to stop using often fail. Encounters with law enforcement or conflicts with family members, friends, and work associates are signs of a potential problem.

Recovery is always possible, although the craving for some drugs makes it difficult to quit without assistance. Many treatment programs are available to help people stop abusing alcohol or drugs. The first step in treatment is to admit you have a problem. This is a major hurdle because denial is a powerful force with substance abuse.

Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, and other recovery groups and programs can be very useful in helping people to quit. If you do not feel okay about your drug or alcohol use and if it is causing you trouble, we want to encourage you to talk about it with your doctor or with someone from a recovery group who can help you. You could also call the National Institute on Drug Abuse at 1-800-662-HELP. It is up to you to take the first step.

AL-ANON and ALA-TEEN are support groups for friends and family members of an alcohol or drug dependent person. The people who love and care for the alcoholic or addicted person often need help, too. For information about these organizations, check your phone directory or call a local alcohol or drug treatment center.

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