



Ending Addiction
Changes Everything

KEY FACTS FOR STATES



**KEY FACTS FOR STATES ON
RISKY SUBSTANCE USE AND ADDICTION**

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- Addiction is a complex brain disease with significant behavioral characteristics. If left untreated, addiction can progress to become chronic and relapsing. Addiction affects approximately 16% of the U.S. population ages 12 and older.
- 9 out of 10 people with addiction began smoking, drinking or using other drugs before they turned 18. Because the adolescent brain is still developing, it is more vulnerable to the negative effects of addictive substances. All addictive substances—tobacco, alcohol, controlled prescription and illicit drugs—affect the brain in similar ways.
- 32% of Americans are not addicted but engage in risky substance use—they smoke, drink excessively or misuse controlled prescription or illicit drugs—putting themselves and others at risk for serious health, social and economic consequences, including accidents, illnesses, homicides and other violent crimes, suicides, property crimes, child neglect and abuse, domestic violence, unplanned pregnancies, academic failure and impaired productivity.
- Risky substance use and addiction together are the number one cause of preventable death in the United States, and a major contributing factor in more than 70 diseases requiring hospitalization.
- Genetics account for between 50 and 75% of the risk for addiction. Mental illness and environmental influences such as a family history of risky substance use or addiction, early age of first use, traumatic childhood events such as abuse or neglect, or significant and stressful changes in life circumstances, also play a large role.
- American culture promotes substance use among adolescents. The acceptance of risky substance use by parents and communities as a normal rite of passage; pervasive advertising of legally available products; media portrayals of substance use as benign or glamorous, fun and relaxing; and low cost and easy access to these substances contribute to the initiation and escalation of adolescent substance use.
- Our failure to address risky substance use and addiction costs state governments an average of 16% of the state budget. For each state dollar spent on risky use and addiction, less than 3 cents goes to fund prevention and treatment while approximately 94 cents pays for the consequences of our failure to prevent and treat this problem. Costs linked to these consequences fall across the state budget in justice, education, health, public safety, child and family assistance, mental health, developmental disabilities and the state workforce. The remaining 3 cents of every dollar pays for costs of alcohol and tobacco taxation and regulation.
- The largest areas of spending on the consequences of risky use and addiction are health care and justice. A comprehensive review of treatment programs by the National Institute on Drug Abuse found that every dollar invested in evidenced-based treatment reduces future burden costs to government by \$12 or more in reduced health care and criminal justice costs alone.
- Addiction can be treated effectively, but, as with other medical conditions, evidence-based pharmaceutical and behavioral treatments must be provided and tailored according to the age, gender, disease severity, co-occurring conditions and the social and cultural circumstances of the affected individual.

- As with other public health problems, risky substance use can be prevented through population-based education and information campaigns, routine screenings and brief interventions when needed.



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