



## *Substance Misuse*

Returning home after deployment is a stressful time. Service members may use alcohol or other drugs to cope. The line between substance use and misuse is sometimes unclear. However, when using alcohol or drugs begins to interfere with daily life it is time to get help.

### **What you need to know**

There are many reasons why people turn to drugs and alcohol. People sometimes see it as a way to escape their stress. Possible reasons for substance use include:

- Stress or not being able to sleep
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or other mental health concerns
- Head or brain injury (TBI)
- Physical pain from injury
- Poor relationships

### **What are the negative effects of substance use?**

The degree of substance misuse varies from person to person. At first, it may seem like it is helping. However over time it can harm all aspects of life. It can affect relationships with family, friends, and co-workers. It can also put you at higher risk for:

- Serious injuries or accidents
- Poor physical or mental health
- Loss of job and income
- Homelessness

## How do you know if you have a problem?

Ask yourself these questions to help determine if your substance use is a problem.

1. Have family or friends made comments about your drinking or drug use?
2. Have you unsuccessfully tried to stop drinking or using drugs?
3. Is your use of alcohol or drugs increasing?
4. Does your use of alcohol or drugs interfere with work?
5. Have you harmed family and friends due to your substance use?

If you answer **YES** to any of these questions, you may have a problem.

There are several online screening tests for alcohol or drug problems. Give them a try if you think you have a problem.

- [www.alcoholscreening.org](http://www.alcoholscreening.org)
- [www.drugscreening.org](http://www.drugscreening.org)

## Tips to help you with substance use problems

- Seek support from family and friends.
- Talk to other Veterans who are recovering from substance use problems.
- Consider family therapy. It may be helpful for you and your loved ones, especially children.
- Stay active with exercise, hobbies, and education.
- Meditation, massage, yoga, or soft music may help reduce stress.

## When should you seek help?

Some combat Veterans may need help with substance misuse. Quitting is hard, but it can be done with help. Contact your local healthcare provider if:

- Use increases or using drugs or alcohol cannot be stopped.
- Using substances is disrupting home and work. Children may be affected more than adults.
- Loved ones have shown concern about substance use.

- Feelings of irritability, nervousness, or sudden personality changes.
- Using substances is more important than anything else.



## REMEMBER...

*The line between substance use and misuse is sometimes unclear. Over time substance misuse can harm all aspects of life. It can affect relationships with family, friends, and co-workers. Quitting is hard, but it can be done with help. Contact your local healthcare provider.*

