

# How to reduce the Risk of Addiction when ADHD makes risk seem rewarding.

Untreated ADHD increases the likelihood of addiction problems.<sup>1</sup>

The good news will empower you to meet the temptations, challenges and valid concerns about addiction with facts.

## Risk-Factor Realities:

- Children with ADHD who become adults with ADHD have an increased risk for substance abuse.<sup>2</sup>
- When other conditions are present – such as Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Conduct Disorder and Anti-Social Personality Disorder – the risk for substance abuse increases.<sup>3</sup>

## Good News:

- Addressing ADHD-related problems early helps prevent the failures in school and social situations that can lead to challenges with self-esteem, underachievement, and ultimately alcohol and drugs.<sup>4</sup>
- Of all the neurobehavioral disorders, ADHD is one of the most treatable; its treatment has one of the highest success rates, normalizing the behavior of 50-65% of people who have ADHD, and substantially improving the behavior of another 20-30% of the people with ADHD.<sup>5</sup>
- There is conflicting evidence regarding whether or not treating ADHD patients with stimulant medications will prevent later substance abuse. An overview from the National Resource Center on ADHD states: *The most conservative interpretation of the literature is that we do not yet know whether stimulant medication treatment predicts later use and abuse of substances.* However, because there have been relatively few studies suggesting that stimulant medication treatment is associated with increased risk for later substance abuse, *most clinicians will give greater weight to the possible benefits of such medication treatment when it appears to be warranted.*<sup>6</sup>

## The Drugs of Choice Realities:

- The risk of regular cigarette smoking increases significantly with each additional ADHD symptom.<sup>7</sup>
- Adults with ADHD use marijuana more often than adults without ADHD.<sup>8</sup>
- Up to one-third of adults with ADHD have, or have had, a problem with alcohol.<sup>9</sup>
- Adults with ADHD are more likely to experience health issues as related to food, caffeine, tobacco and alcohol, and are less likely to exercise or practice other healthy behaviors. These results are tied to behaviors characterized by many adolescents and adults with ADHD, including a diminished regard for healthy lifestyle behaviors.<sup>10</sup>

## Good News:

- For adults with ADHD who struggle to maintain a healthy lifestyle and are overweight, ADHD medication has several health benefits: not only will it help with ADHD symptoms; it often causes weight loss, as it can help you start and stick with an exercise program, and help you get organized with regard to keeping medical and dental appointments.<sup>11</sup>
- People with ADHD who further their education are far less likely to be involved in behaviors that predispose people with ADHD to substance abuse, and are more likely to have better life and job opportunities.<sup>12</sup>
- If alcohol becomes a problem, 12-step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous provide the opportunity to make friends with people who do not drink and who are also working to improve their lives.<sup>13</sup>

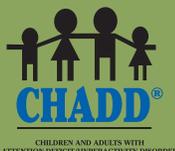
## Footnotes:

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4. Parenting a Child with ADHD, What We Know, CHADD RESOURCE CENTER
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6. Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) from the National Resource Center on ADHD: A Program of CHADD: Are children who take stimulant medications more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol later in life? (2009). <http://www.help4adhd.org/faq.cfm?fid=41&varLang=en>
7. Barkley, RA, (2010) *Taking Charge of Adult ADHD*. New York, NY: Guilford Press:263. 8. Ibid.
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11. Barkley, RA, (2010) *Taking Charge of Adult ADHD*. New York, NY: Guilford Press:251-252.
12. Barkley, RA, (2010) *Taking Charge of Adult ADHD*. New York, NY: Guilford Press:267.
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# The Many faces of ADHD

Understanding Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder



**ADDITUDE** LIVING WELL WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT

<http://www.adhdawarenessmonth.org/>