

Co-occurring Mental Disorders and Substance Use Disorders

Co-occurring Disorders

Mental disorders and substance use disorders can occur at the same time. For instance, if you have panic disorder, you may abuse alcohol. If you use cocaine, you may have depression.

This is known as **co-occurring disorders**.

Few people receive treatment for both disorders because only 1 disorder is known. Your health care provider can give you a short test that can tell if you have co-occurring disorders.

The best treatment focuses on both the mental disorder and the substance use disorder at the same time.

Problems Caused by Co-occurring Disorders

If you have both a mental disorder and a substance use disorder, you are at risk for:

- many hospital visits
- relationship conflicts
- problems with the law
- loss of housing or job
- long-term health problems
- suicide
- problems staying in treatment.

Mental Disorder With a Substance Use Disorder

About 2 in 10 people who have a mental disorder will also have a substance use disorder.

If you have a mental disorder, substance use may:

- make your mental disorder worse
- hide symptoms of your mental disorder
- keep symptoms from getting better
- reduce how well medicine for mental disorder works
- keep you from getting the most out of counseling.

Substance Use Disorder With a Mental Disorder

About 5 in 10 people who have a substance use disorder will also have a mental disorder.

If you have a substance use disorder, a mental disorder may:

- increase your substance use and lead to addiction
- hide symptoms of your substance use disorder
- keep you from getting the most out of your treatment.

Treatment for Co-occurring Disorders

The best treatment plan is to work with a health care team to treat both your mental disorder and substance use disorder at the same time.

You will work with your health care provider, social worker, case manager and others. They will combine techniques from both mental health and chemical health treatment.

Your health care team members will:

- listen to what you want. If you are not ready to begin treatment, they will listen to your concerns and help you with the problems you would like to focus on first.
- try different techniques to find what works best for you. Options include talk therapy, medicines (to treat the mental disorder or help reduce substance use) and groups created to address co-occurring disorders.

- help your care circle (family, friends and others close to you) better understand your disorders and treatment. Ask a member of your health care team about support groups for you and your care circle.

Resources

- **Allina Health:**
allinahealth.org/mentalhealth
- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:**
samhsa.gov
- **Minnesota Department of Human Services:**
mn.gov/dhs (Search for “co-occurring.”)