



PLATINUM
HEALTH

Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

What you need to know!

Substance use disorder (SUD) is a problematic pattern of substance use that affects your health and well-being. The long-term use of substances can wreak havoc on your body, mind, social life and job.

What is substance abuse?

Substance use disorder (SUD), formerly known as drug addiction, is a mental health condition where you experience a problematic pattern of substance use that affects your health and quality of life.

Substances change how your brain functions over time. They release dopamine, a chemical in your brain that makes you feel good — until the substance wears off. Your brain and body want to continue this good feeling, even if it's unhealthy. It can significantly impact your emotional well-being, relationships, education and career. In many cases, it's life-threatening.

Some of the most common types of SUD include:



Alcohol use disorder.



Cocaine use disorder.



Cannabis use disorder.



Tobacco use disorder.




Opioid use disorder.



Methamphetamine use disorder.

It's common to have more than one SUD at a time, like alcohol use disorder and tobacco use disorder. This is known as polysubstance use disorder.





What are the signs of substance abuse?

According to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the signs of substance use disorder include:

- Taking the substance in larger amounts and for a longer amount of time than you're meant to if it's a prescription.
- Having a strong desire or urge to use the substance.
- Having unsuccessful efforts to cut down on or manage substance use.
- Spending a lot of time obtaining or using the substance or recovering from its effects.
- Having issues fulfilling responsibilities at work, school or home due to substance use.
- Continuing to use the substance, even when it causes problems in relationships.
- Giving up social, occupational or recreational activities because of substance use.
- Using substances again and again, even when it puts you in danger.
- Continuing substance use despite an ongoing physical or psychological problem that's likely caused or worsened by the substance.
- Developing tolerance (need for increased amounts to get the same effect).
- Experiencing withdrawal symptoms, which can be relieved by taking more of the substance.

What are the risk factors?

Substance use disorder affects people of all ages, races, sexes, genders and socioeconomic levels. You may be more at risk of developing it if you:



Have an underlying mental health condition.



Have a history of adverse childhood experiences.



Have a genetic susceptibility (a genetic variant makes SUDs more common).



Have exposure or easy access to substances.

Accepting Help

SUD exists on a spectrum and may be mild, moderate or severe. No matter where you are, know that this condition is treatable and help is available when you're ready.

If you struggle to overcome it, do not hesitate to seek help through Platinum Health's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). EAP Counsellors are available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week to offer counselling and support on **010 133 0525**. Alternatively, you are welcome to contact our Mental Health Services on **014 590 1700** or **080 000 6942**.