



Addiction to Alcohol

By Kathryn Dickerson

Am I addicted if I like to drink?

This is Charlie. He likes to drink. He has gotten drunk a few times but it doesn't mean that Charlie is addicted to alcohol.

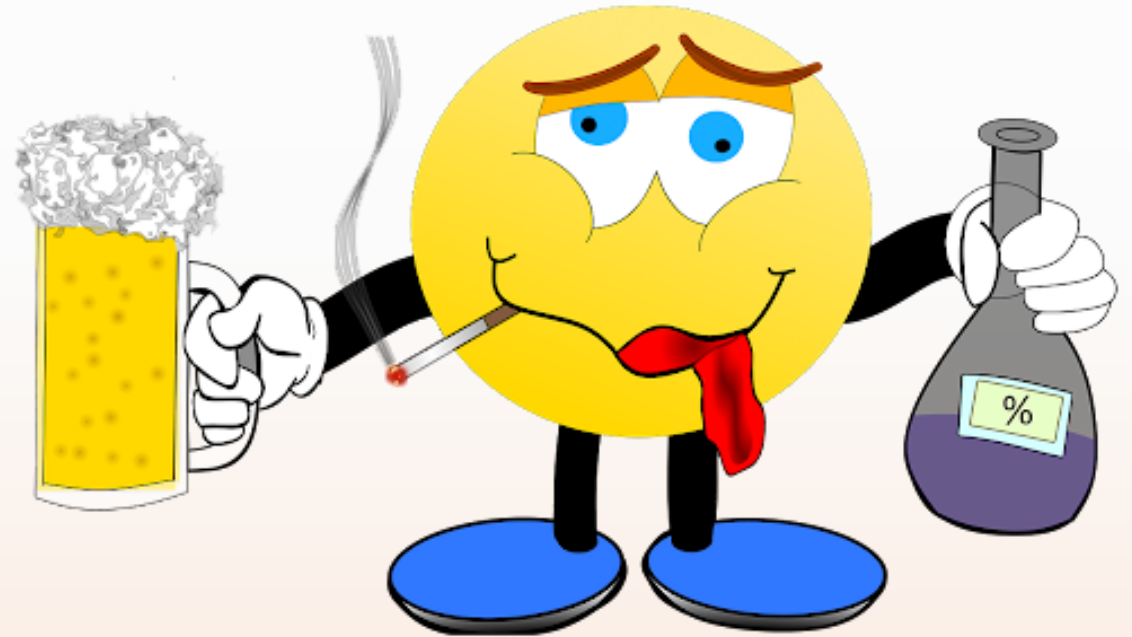
Charlie is suffering from substance abuse that can eventually lead to an addiction.



Substance abuse can lead to addiction

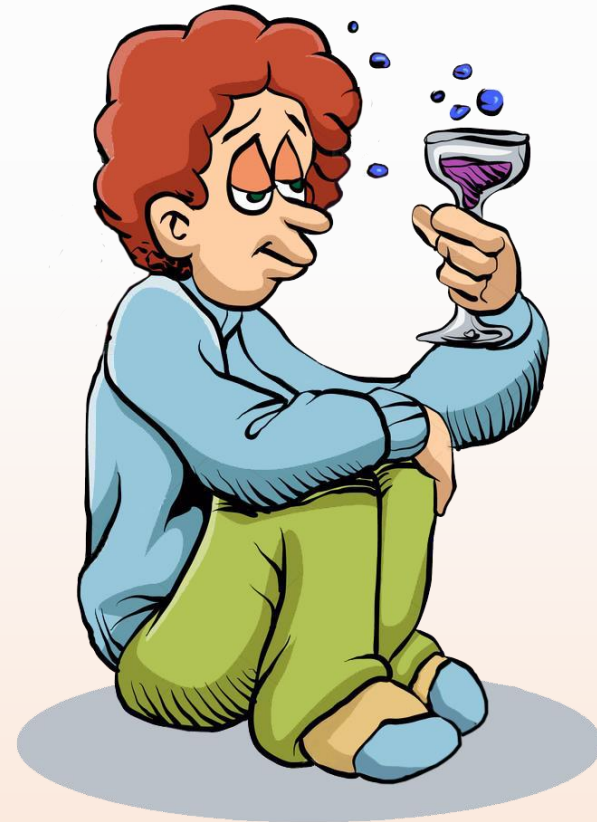
Addiction and substance abuse are two different issues. Substance abuse means using a substance in the wrong way.

You can abuse a drug or alcohol without having an addiction.



How do people get addicted?

Addiction to alcohol results from a combination of factors. A person is more at risk of becoming an alcoholic if they experience one or more of the following common causes of alcoholism.



Stressful Environments

While not every person turns to alcohol to relieve stress, some people do. When a person has a stressful job, for example, they may be more likely to drink heavily.



Drinking at an early age

Those who begin drinking at an early age are more likely to have an alcohol problem or become dependent on alcohol as they get older.



Mental Health

Anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues increase the risk of alcoholism.

When a person feels anxious, it is easy to turn to alcohol which temporarily reduces those feelings of discomfort. Repeated bouts of drinking to relieve depression can lead to alcohol addiction.



Depression



Some people feel like Charlie. They get depressed for different reasons.

Deep depression is serious and requires medical treatment.

If not treated, the person can become suicidal.

Abusive Relationships

When Charlie was young, he was abused. Since then, he suffers from depression and anxiety.

When Charlie drinks he forgets about his sadness. He begins to think that alcohol is the answer to his problems.



Taking alcohol with medication



Some medicines increase the toxic effects of alcohol on the body.

When a person takes alcohol with their medications, they become addicted to the feelings which can be very dangerous and life-threatening.

Family History

Your risk of alcoholism automatically increases when you have a relative that is an alcoholic. Spending time around people who drink heavily acts as an influence for you to do the same.





How do you treat addiction?

You cannot force people to stop drinking alcohol. This is a decision that must be made by the individual.

Heavy drinking damages your health

Alcoholic drinking increases risk of suffering from the following:

- Liver disease
- Pancreatitis
- Cancer
- Ulcers and stomach problems
- Damage to the Immune system
- Brain damage
- Malnourishment
- Osteoporosis
- Heart disease



Seeing a specialist



If you think you have a drinking problem, consult a medical professional that is specialized in substance abuse counseling. They can give you guidance and support.

Support Groups

Sometimes support groups can help people like Charlie.

Support groups are just a group of people that also suffer from alcoholism. It's good to talk to others about your feelings and why you are sad.





Myth

Some people think that it is easy to stop taking drugs or drinking alcohol.

This is not true. Addiction of any kind is extremely difficult to break. It is recommended to seek professional help for those suffering from alcohol or drug addiction.

Charlie will be okay!

Charlie has joined a support group where he can share his struggles with addiction.

Today Charlie is living a happy life free of addiction to alcohol.



References

- National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2017, March). Mental Health Effects. Retrieved from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/health-consequences-drug-misuse/mental-health-effects>
- Can You Prevent Substance Abuse? (2014, March 18). Retrieved from <https://americanaddictioncenters.org/blog/five-tips-help-prevent-substance-abuse>
- Chanell.baylor. (2019, November 6). National Helpline. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>
- <https://talbotcampus.com/addiction-and-mental-health-resources/alcoholism-and-drug-abuse-articles/common-causes-alcoholism/>

YouLearn Educational Series provides the low literate reader with educational materials in an easy to understand format; developed in cooperation with Texas A&M University School of Public Health, PHLT303, class 2020.

For additional information on healthcare booklets, please contact: info@youlearnacademies.org – a leader in educational materials for the rural poor since 2014. <https://www.roseacademies.org>



PUBLIC HEALTH
TEXAS A&M HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER

Texas A&M School of Public Health
*Transforming health through interdisciplinary inquiry,
innovative solutions, and development of leaders.*
<https://public-health.tamu.edu>



YouLearn Academies
Educational resources for Low Literate Readers
<https://www.youlearnacademies.org>



Rose Academies
Empowering with Knowledge since 2014
<https://www.roseacademies.org>

YouLearn Educational Series

© copyright 2020