



Depression and anxiety

Mental disorders such as depression and anxiety often have a complex relationship with an individual's substance abuse, such as opioid addiction or substance use. Although it can be difficult to determine the precise origin and time of onset of the mental disorder and substances use disorder, researchers have established a clear link between opioid misuse and anxiety and mood problems.

A mood disorder or anxiety disorder may lead an individual to use opioid drugs to self-medicate or attempt to alleviate their mental health symptoms on their own. Here are some facts specific to the co-occurrence of mood or anxiety disorders with opioid medication misuse.

- Depression appears to be a common mood disorder that co-occurs with drug abuse such as opioid addiction or dependence. Anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder are also found to often co-occur with drug abuse.
- Some studies have shown that women develop a mood or anxiety disorder first, while men were found to more often develop the addiction first. Heavy use of opioid drugs can trigger depressive or anxiety episodes in individuals who already suffer with these mental health challenges.
- It is estimated that 40 to 60 percent of chronic pain patients also experience depression or anxiety.

- As many addictions are caused by an individual attempting to self-medicate the symptoms of an undiagnosed co-occurring mental disorder. Many people with both substance abuse and mood or anxiety disorders experience them independently, with none or only some of mental health episodes being induced by drugs. Treating both disorders together is often necessary.
- People with the co-occurring disorders are at high risk for additional problems such as hospitalizations, financial problems, family problems, and medical illnesses and may be less adherent to treatment.

Contact Us

Your program provides access to tools and other resources online or call us directly to speak to a professional counselor who is available everyday and at any time to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.

Sources: Epidemiologic Catchment Area study, National Institute on Health; National Comorbidity Study; National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism; Martins, S. S., Fenton, M. C., Keyes, K. M., Blanco, C., Zhu, H., Storr, C. L. (2012), mood and anxiety disorders and their association with non-medical prescription opioid use and prescription opioid-use disorder: Longitudinal evidence from the national epidemiologic study on alcohol and related conditions.

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