

Drugs & Alcohol

The use of street drugs or the excessive use of alcohol is harmful to the physical and mental health of all people. However, the risks associated with drug use are even greater for you because you have experienced an episode of psychosis.

Some of the additional risks you are faced with in using street drugs include:

- Increased risk of relapse
- Development of more secondary problems (such as depression, anxiety or memory problems)
- Slower recovery
- More persistent psychotic symptoms

Certain drugs may also interact dangerously with medications that you may be taking.

Although for many medications the use of alcohol is usually okay in small quantities, there are certain medications that require alcohol be avoided. Talk with your EPI Clinician and Psychiatrist about the recommendations for alcohol use for the medications you are taking.

People use drugs for many different reasons. Most often, people do drugs because they cause certain desired effects.

Some of the more common desired effects people report include:

- Feeling “high”

- Feelings of relaxation or calmness
- Avoiding boredom
- Experiencing a “thrill”
- Escaping from feelings of stress

What are the desired effects you experience from doing drugs?

Most people also report that they experience some negative effects from their drug use. Negative effects can be both immediate and long-term.

Some of the more common immediate negative effects that people report include:

- The effect of the drug can be unpredictable – sometimes resulting in panic, paranoia, or depression
- Although the drug creates good feelings initially, this can be followed by fatigue or depressed mood
- Psychotic symptoms get worse (more hallucinations or feelings of disorganization)
- Risks to health or safety
- Costs money

The more common long-term risks include:

- Relapse of psychosis
- Dependency or addiction
- Causes problems with family or friends
- Slower recovery from psychosis

- Negative health consequences
- More secondary problems
- Life goals are neglected
- Financial problems

What do you think the immediate and long-term negative effects are for your drug use?

How do these negative effects compare to the desired effects you experience?

Can you see any advantages to reducing your current drug use?

If you decide that there are advantages to reducing your drug use and decide to try – remember that reducing use is not simply a matter of willpower. Effectively reducing drug use requires setting goals and solving problems.

After you’ve started reducing your use, you’ll probably find that you will miss the desired effects of the drug and that you experience urges to use the drug more often.

Most people find that these urges are triggered by certain feelings (such as stress, boredom, depression or anxiety) or situations (such as being with friends who use regularly or being at a party where use is encouraged).

By anticipating what these feelings or situations are that may trigger use, and by coming up in advance with possible solutions for handling these, you can increase the chances that you will avoid using at these times.

Another thing you can do to help you decrease your drug use is to find activities that substitute for some of the desired effects of the drug. For example, if one of the desired effects you experienced from using the drug was alleviation of boredom, find activities that you enjoy and engage in these when you experience boredom.

After you have reduced your use, or even quit altogether, you may experience a lapse where you increase your use. Slips like that this are common.

Effectively making this type of long-term change takes time and requires learning about what your triggers for use are. If you experience a lapse, review what happened and plan strategies to manage similar situations in future.

It's important to be open with your EPI Clinician and Psychiatrist about your drug use, even if you do not want to change your use right now.

Drug use can have negative interactions with your treatment and those involved with your

treatment need to know the details of your drug use so that they can provide you with the safest and most effective treatments possible.

If you have decided to reduce your use or are even just considering it – communicate this also to your EPI Clinician and Psychiatrist – they can help you with the process and may also make suggestions for treatment.

Ultimately, it is up to you to decide to reduce your use and it is your efforts that will lead to success.