

What is Dual Diagnosis?

When someone has a diagnosed drug and alcohol issue and a mental health issue this is called dual diagnosis or co-morbidity. Drug and alcohol use and abuse is widespread in the population of people who have been diagnosed with a mental health issue. Sometimes because of the complex nature of dual diagnosis it can take a while for a diagnosis to be made.

What causes Dual Diagnosis?

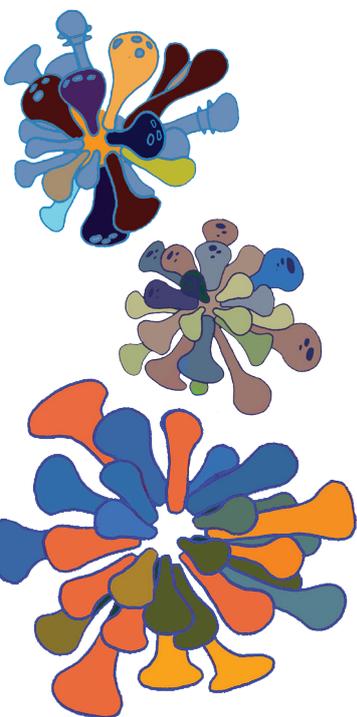
Does the drug and alcohol use cause the mental health issue or the mental health issue cause the drug and alcohol use? Is it the chicken or the egg? The truth is we really don't know but there are a number of theories around that explain why dual diagnosis occurs including the following:

- Sometimes the substance taken can cause a mental health issue like a drug induced psychosis.
- Some people report using substances as a way of managing the symptoms associated with their mental health issue however this is a strategy that only works for a very brief period of time before a person's mental health starts to decline and their tolerance to drugs increases.
- The drug and alcohol and mental health issues develop separately but their interaction has significant negative consequences for the person.
- The person is more at risk if they have experienced an adverse life event or stress which they have struggled to cope with and/or a family member has a substance problem and/or a mental health condition.

What treatment is available for people who have dual diagnosis?

Each person's experience of dual diagnosis is different therefore it is important that you or your family member obtain specialist treatment for both conditions, usually at the same time. Treatment at the same time helps reduce the significant physical and psychological impacts dual diagnosis can have on your health. What this means is that you will usually have a treatment team of specialists that may include staff from the Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol services.

Evidence suggests treatment is not as effective if it is only addressing the mental health condition or only the drug and alcohol issue. Patients who do not receive appropriate treatment often develop significant social problems, difficulty with daily living activities and worsening of their physical and mental health.



What does the Drug and Alcohol Service offer?

The Drug and Alcohol Service offers discreet, flexible and non-judgemental services at various hospital and community health centre locations across the district. If you or a family member would like to access any of the following treatments or talk to staff about what treatment would be most appropriate then you can call the 24/7 central intake number or access information on the website.

Phone: 1300 661 050

Website: www.nbmlhd.nsw.gov.au/da.

Treatment may include one or more of the following:

An admission to the service's Inpatient Withdrawal Management (Detoxification) ward where patients receive medical treatment as they withdraw from substances.

Support from our Drug and Alcohol Medical Clinic where patients can speak to a medical doctor who provides drug and alcohol focussed treatments.

The Drug and Alcohol service also has a Drugs in Pregnancy Support (DIPS) program where a midwife provides support to women who are pregnant and using drugs or who have already stopped using.

The service also offers Opioid Treatment Programs for people who are looking at ways of managing their addiction to opioids.

The Drug and Alcohol psychology and counselling teams include:-

- A Youth Team who work with young people 20 years and under
- A Forensic Team who provide court diversion programs including Magistrates Early Referral Into Treatment (MERIT) and Drug Court
- An Aboriginal Liaison Officer and Social Worker

We acknowledge the Traditional Peoples of the land on which we stand. We pay our respects to them for their care of the land.

References

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