

# SAFETY OUTLOOK

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## Where does substance abuse begin?

Many, if not all of us, know someone who struggles with drug abuse. According to the Tennessee Medical Association, our state ranks second per capita in the country for prescription drug abuse. While painful to see, we are often confused why one would choose such a destructive and painful choice in their life. So over the next few newsletters, we are going to discuss 5 of the most common reasons a person might be drawn to drugs and how we can avoid or overcome each reason.

### 1. ILLNESS

A hurt back...broken foot....cracked tooth....these are all valid reasons to see a medical doctor to resolve the pain and discomfort that one may be experiencing. Often, a doctor will use narcotics while they provide the necessary treatment for the injury and during the recovery process. However, once the assigned time for medication is past, their body can start to have a dependency on the drug. This dependency can be hard to break if one is not intentional about it. Depending on the length of time the drug was used for the injury and the type of drug used, the withdrawal symptoms may be so strong that one chooses to remain on the drug rather than seek help to discontinue using it.

Although initial drug use may be voluntary, drugs have been shown to alter brain chemistry, which interferes with an individual's ability to make decisions and can lead to compulsive craving, seeking, and use. This then becomes a substance dependency.

How can you avoid this path of dependency?

- Discard the prescription as soon as possible. Once your treatment is finished, get rid of them! Don't leave them around the house where the temptation to use them is increased. Even if you don't feel tempted, there might be someone else in the house that could. In fact, over 70% of abusers, begin their addiction with unused prescriptions from family & friends.

We will discuss how to properly discard unused prescriptions in an upcoming newsletter after we finish this series.

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