



Toxicology

Let's Talk Tox

A resource for drugs of abuse testing

Substance use disorders (SUDs) are a leading cause of disability in the United States, with millions of individuals experiencing significant impairments, including negative health impacts and an inability to effectively meet responsibilities at home, school, or in the workplace.¹ Polysubstance abuse, or the mixing of multiple illicit substances, is common.²

The 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) prepared by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMHSA) reported that in the US:



61.2 million people aged 12 or older (21.9% of the population) used illicit drugs in the past year.³



46.3 million people aged 12 or older (16.5% of the population) met DSM-5 criteria for having a substance use disorder in the past year.³



94% of people aged 12 or older with a substance use disorder did not receive any form of treatment.³

Prevention

Substance abuse prevention, commonly targeted at children and teens, attempts to prevent substance use and limit problems associated with illicit drugs. These efforts may focus on both the individual as well as their surrounding environment.⁴

Promoting the prevention of substance abuse

October has been designated [National Substance Abuse Prevention month](#) as a time to spotlight the vital importance of substance abuse prevention at individual and community levels, including remembering those who have lost their lives to substance abuse and acknowledging individuals in recovery and those supporting them.

[SAMHSA's National Prevention Week](#) (May 12th – May 18th, 2024) highlights the work of communities and organizations working to raise awareness of substance misuse prevention, celebrating year-round initiatives and positive impacts.

Treatment and recovery

SAMHSA defines recovery as “A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.” Achieving recovery is dependent upon licensed, accredited, and evidence-based treatment. *See table 1 for more information.*

A variety of national and international events put a spotlight on substance abuse prevention, treatment, and recovery, educating the public on these issues to mobilize efforts and resources towards the fight against substance abuse and the opioid pandemic.

Event highlights

- [National Substance Abuse Prevention month](#)
- [SAMHSA's National Prevention Week](#)
- [International Overdose Awareness Day](#)
- [National Recovery Month](#)
- [International Recovery Day](#)
- [International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking](#)

Want to learn more from a Toxicology industry expert?

Each question remains completely anonymous. Ask your questions today!



Letstalktox@thermofisher.com

Table 1

Drug testing in SUD treatment can serve as:⁵

- An initial assessment during evaluation for diagnosis of an SUD
- A screen for preventing potential adverse effects of pharmacotherapy
- A method of monitoring patient use of illicit substances or adherence to pharmacotherapy treatment
- A way to assess treatment plan efficacy

In healthcare settings, drug testing is also useful for:⁵

- Determining/refuting perinatal maternal drug use
- An addition to counseling and psychiatric care
- Monitoring compliance during treatment with opioids or other medications with the potential for abuse
- Detecting drug use or abuse that may negatively impact patient care in other medical specialties

1. SAMHSA (2023, June 9). Prevention of Substance Use and Mental Disorders. <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/prevention#substance-use-disorder-prevention>.
2. CDC (2022, February 23). Polysubstance Use Facts. CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/stopoverdose/polysubstance-use/index.html>
3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. National Survey on Drug Use and Health 2021 (NSDUH-2021-DS0001). Retrieved from <https://datafiles.samhsa.gov/>
4. NCADD (n.d.). Community Prevention. NCADD National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence of the East San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys, Inc. <https://www.ncaddesgpnv.org/services/29-community-prevention>
5. (2012). Clinical Drug Testing in Primary Care (p. 5). SAMHSA. <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/TAP-32-Clinical-Drug-Testing-Primary-Care/SMAT2-4668>