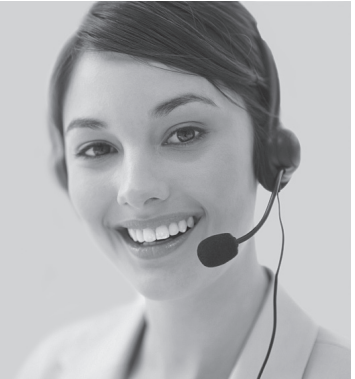


“It was great to talk with you.

Thank you for your interest in ‘When Someone in Your Family Has an Addiction.’
I hope you find this tip sheet helpful.

Please give me a call if you have more questions about this or other topics.

As your UPMC Health Plan health coach, I am ready to help in any way I can.”



Is someone in your family suffering with addiction? Without a doubt, it is having an effect on your family life. But every family is different. The effects tend to vary, depending on:

- How severe the addiction is
- How you and others in your family cope with it
- Other problems in your family
- How positive other parts of your family life are

That said, families dealing with addiction do experience many of the same problems. It can help to know that your family is not alone.

Below are some of the most common problems. Take a minute to think about which ones may apply to your family.

Feelings

- Tension, frustration, or anger
- Worry or fear
- Sadness, grief, depression, or disappointment
- Guilt, embarrassment, or shame
- Emotional exhaustion

Communication

- Too much arguing or yelling
- Talking too much or not talking about the addiction
- Not expressing many good feelings
- Angry silence



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Interactions

- Protecting the addicted family member from problems caused by the addiction
- Trying to “fix” the addiction by taking over what he or she is responsible for
- Too much closeness or distance between family members
- Lack of structure in family life
- No way to predict how people may act
- Rules not enforced with the children
- Making the addicted family member the center of family life
- Changes in family routines
- Family, relatives or friends avoiding one another
- Problems between spouses

Neglect, Abuse, or Violence

- Child abuse
- Child neglect
- Abuse between spouses

Health Problems or Poor Lifestyle Habits

- Being sick more often or chronic illnesses getting worse
- Poor eating, exercise, or sleep habits
- Using tobacco
- Other family members abusing alcohol or other drugs
- Injuries or illness from abuse, neglect, or violence

Money or Legal Problems

- Money spent on drugs, alcohol or addiction treatment
- Losing or not being able to keep a job
- Legal problems due to the addiction

Other Possible Effects on Children

- Acting like a parent or friend to the parent who is not addicted
- Problems in school
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Breaking the law
- Spending time with a “bad crowd”



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Longer-Term Effects*

Children of addicted parents are more likely to have problems in life. They may have behavior or learning problems. They may have anxiety or depression. They may abuse alcohol or other drugs.

Women who use alcohol or drugs during pregnancy are more likely to give birth too early. Babies born too early often have health problems that need special medical care. Later in life, they may have health problems. They may abuse drugs or alcohol or have mental health problems.

Some family members may be affected in *positive* ways. They may bond more closely with other family members. Or they may be driven to work hard and do well in school, sports, work, or other areas of life. Some may help other families that are dealing with addiction.

Ways Family Members Can Cope

- **Learn as much as possible about addiction.**
- **Attend mutual support programs.** Examples are Al-Anon or Nar-Anon.
- **Practice self-care.** For example, eat healthy meals. Get enough exercise. Get enough sleep. Practice healthy ways to cope with stress.
- **If possible, attend family therapy.** It can help you and your family:
 - Express your thoughts and feelings.
 - Encourage the addicted family member to get help.
 - Focus on taking care of yourself. You can do this even if the addicted family member refuses to get help.

Not sure how to find a therapist? Your doctor or UPMC Health Plan health coach can help.

- * 1. Nunes EV, Weissman MM, Goldstein R, et al. (2000). Psychiatric disorders and impairment in the children of opiate addicts: Prevalences and distribution by ethnicity. *The American Journal on Addictions*, 9: 232-41.
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When Someone in Your Family Has an Addiction

Take Action

1. Share this tip sheet with other adult family members.
2. Decide if family therapy is an option. If so, find a family therapist who specializes in addiction. Make an appointment.
3. Choose one of the above ways for individual family members to cope. Make a plan below to put it into action this week. *Be specific.*

For example, "I will go out for a 15-minute walk three nights this week after dinner. I will ask a family member to go with me."

4. Encourage other members to choose a way to take care of themselves too.

Content provided by Dennis C. Daley, PhD and Antoine Douaihy, MD, 2014.



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