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What is Dependency and Addiction?

Vaping



Definition of addiction

"Addiction is defined as not having control over doing, taking or using something to the point where it could be harmful to you." NHS

Addiction is most commonly associated with gambling, drugs, alcohol and smoking, but it's possible to be addicted to just about anything, including:

- **work** – some people are obsessed with their work to the extent that they become physically exhausted or it affects their social life and relationship with others
- **internet** – as computer and mobile phone use has increased, so too have computer and internet addictions; people may spend hours each day and night surfing the internet or gaming while neglecting other aspects of their lives
- **shopping** – shopping becomes an addiction when you buy things you don't need or want to achieve a buzz; this is quickly followed by feelings of guilt, shame or despair
- **solvents** – volatile substance abuse is when you inhale substances such as glue, aerosols, petrol or lighter fuel to give you a feeling of intoxication

What causes addiction?

There are lots of reasons why addictions begin. In the case of drugs, alcohol and nicotine, these substances affect the way you feel, both physically and mentally. These feelings can be enjoyable and create a powerful urge to use the substances again.

Being addicted to something means that not having it causes withdrawal symptoms, or a "come down". Because this can be unpleasant, it's easier to carry on having or doing what you crave, and so the cycle continues.

Often, an addiction gets out of control because you need more and more to satisfy a craving and achieve the "high".



Nicotine addiction

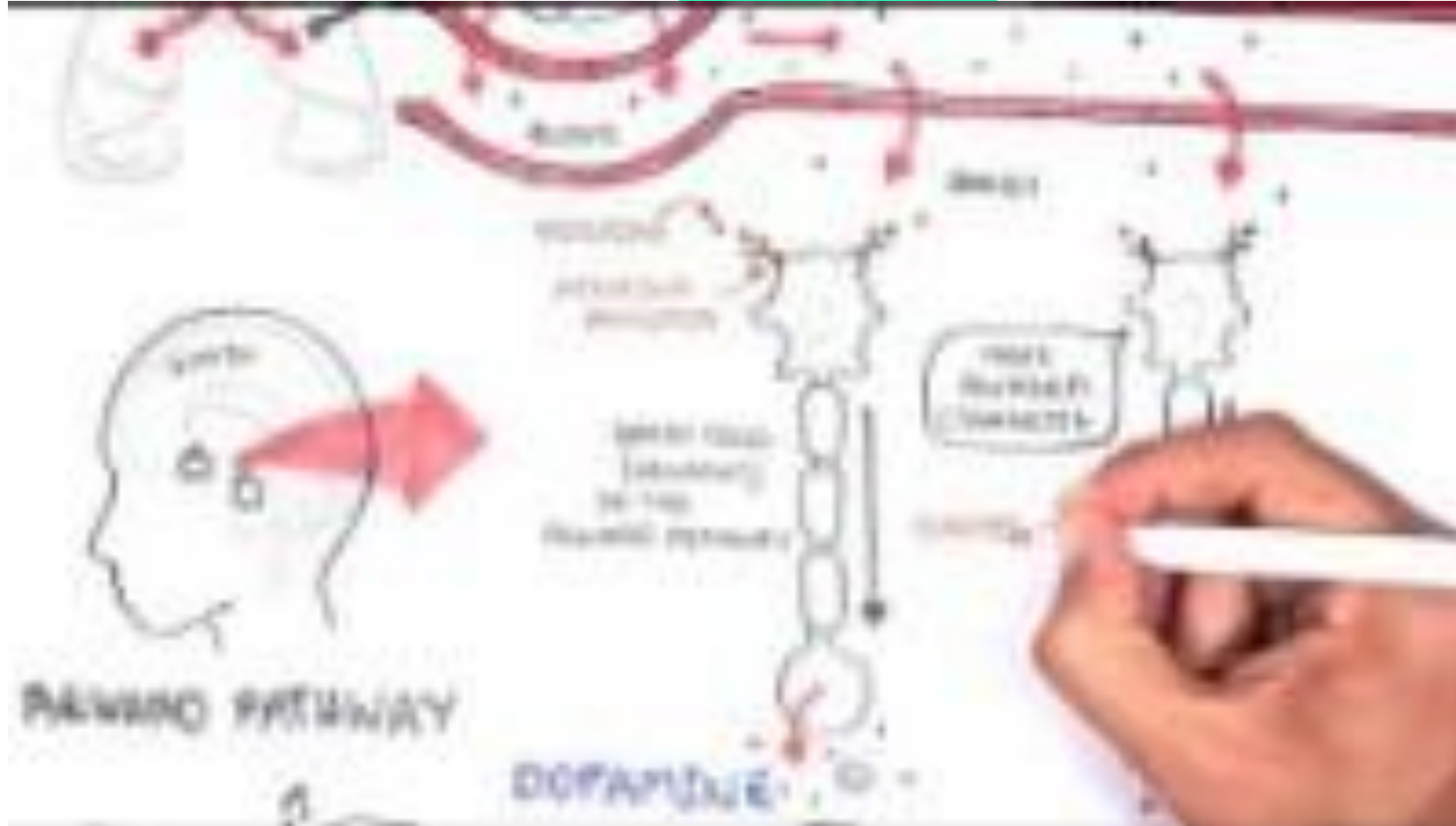
Vapes typically contain nicotine which is an addictive substance. You can become dependent on nicotine through using products such as vapes, cigarettes and nicotine pouches, especially if you use them regularly.

You can become addicted to nicotine within days of starting to use it, even if you only vape or smoke occasionally.

Nicotine can make it harder for you to concentrate, learn and control your impulses.

Using nicotine products regularly causes changes in the brain that mean you need more nicotine to get the same effect and withdrawal can become more intense.

Why is Nicotine Addictive? The Science



Nicotine addiction

The effects of nicotine depend on how you take it, how much you take and the strength of the nicotine in the product.

When nicotine is inhaled, the buzz you feel is the release of adrenaline which stimulates the body. It causes your blood pressure and heart rate to increase, and makes you breathe faster. Nicotine also activates areas of your brain that are involved in producing feelings of pleasure and reward. If you aren't used to taking nicotine, you might feel:

- Dizziness
- Headache
- Racing heart
- Nausea / possible vomiting
- Stomach cramps
- Weakness

Nicotine is a toxin and poisoning can happen if larger doses are taken. Symptoms are usually quite mild including nausea and vomiting, headaches and stomach pains, but in more severe cases it can lead to convulsions, depressed breathing and heartbeat, and even death. Serious nicotine poisonings are rare. Source: *'Talk to Frank'*

Why is vaping addictive?

When a person vapes, nicotine reaches the brain within about ten seconds.

At first, nicotine improves mood and concentration, decreases anger and stress, relaxes muscles and reduces appetite.

Regular doses of nicotine lead to changes in the brain, which then lead to nicotine withdrawal symptoms when the supply of nicotine decreases.

Vaping temporarily reduces these withdrawal symptoms and can therefore, reinforce the habit. This cycle is how most vapers and smokers become nicotine dependent.

People who use nicotine regularly build up a tolerance to the immediate short-term effects so they might feel more intense relief from the discomfort of withdrawal when they smoke or vape.

Higher tolerance will mean more nicotine is required to deliver the same sensation.

Signs and symptoms of nicotine addiction

Nicotine addiction could be as a result of regular use of vapes, cigarettes or other nicotine containing products.

A person who is addicted to nicotine may experience:

- Cravings (for example feeling like you really need to vape)
- Going out of your way to access nicotine (for example disrupting your day-to-day routines to vape)
- Feeling anxious or irritable (for example if you want to vape but can't)
- You find it hard to stop



Nicotine and mental health and emotional well-being

Vaping can lead to dependence on nicotine. Dependence on nicotine can negatively affect mental health and well-being and can be disruptive to life and learning.

It is a misconception that vaping reduces stress and anxiety. In fact, young people who vape for stress relief report having higher stress levels than young people who don't vape.

Nicotine creates an immediate sense of relaxation but this feeling is temporary and quickly replaced by increased anxiety, tension, cravings and withdrawal symptoms.

Withdrawal symptoms can be temporarily managed by further doses of nicotine but this will not reduce underlying feelings of anxiety or address why an individual feels anxious in the first place.

There is no benefit to using vaping as a coping mechanism for stress and anxiety and **nicotine dependency may get in the way of you taking part in activities that are effective coping mechanisms (e.g. participating in clubs).**



