

# Is Your Nursing Colleague Impaired?

## Part One: Impact and Indicators

### Drug Abuse Indicators

- Errors in documentation & patient care
- Illegible handwriting
- Failure to do a narcotic count
- Uses the maximum PRN dosage when other nurses use less
- Work habits deteriorate
- Prefers units with high narcotic use
- RARELY absent—needs access to drugs
- Frequently takes bathroom breaks
- Pinpoint pupils, runny nose, watery eyes, diaphoresis, etc.
- May be sleepy or hyper while working
- Offers to help distribute meds to other nurses' patients
- Patients complain of no pain relief
- Prefers PMs and night shifts

### Alcohol Abuse Indicators

- Alcohol odor on breath
- Tremors of the hands
- Emotional instability/mood swings
- Lapses in memory or confusion
- Sleepiness or dozing off at work
- Increased tardiness & absenteeism
- Complains of personal/financial problems
- Work habits deteriorate
- May withdraw from colleagues
- May have transportation issues if convicted of DWI (driving while impaired)
- Erratic job history; multiple employers
- Slowed, thick speech
- Errors of judgment
- Excessive use of mouthwash/mints

## Impacts of chemical dependency on Nurse

### Health

- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Cardiovascular disease
- Traumatic injuries
- Liver and other diseases
- Death from overdose, suicide or injuries

### Personal Life

- Low self esteem
- Increased risk for anxiety and depression
- Family and other relationships suffer
- Financial problems
- Legal issues

### Professional Practice

- Increased risk of harming patient(s)
- May lose respect & trust of colleagues
- Loss of self respect
- May be fired, suspended and/or placed on probation.
- Loss of income and seniority
- May lose license.
- Will be monitored if allowed to re-tur to practice

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## Content Author:

Mary Jo Willis, MS; University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Nursing

