

What Is The Most Critical Risk Factor In Addiction

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You've probably heard that addiction can run in the family. But, you may have also heard that genetics are only part of the equation, existing alongside environmental factors, which are just as critical to understanding if you want to prevent or [treat addiction](#).

These environmental factors could include upbringing and socioeconomic status to exposure to prolonged stress or trauma, whether at home or in your neighborhood. This article will prioritize understanding an individual's personal susceptibility to addiction over any other risk factor.



The Environmental Factors Leading To Addiction

It shouldn't be surprising that there are a variety of external factors which could lead a person towards developing an addiction, but what exactly makes them more likely to do so?

Family Factors

Did you know that genes account for about half of a person's risk of addiction? If a close relative, such as a parent or sibling, has an addiction, it is more likely to develop in you. In fact, there have been cases where identical twins have both turned to [substance abuse](#) independently of one another. This doesn't mean that children living with an addicted parent will definitely turn out the same way, but they are at a greater risk than those who don't grow up around this influence.



Peer Influence

Since teenagers and young adults often experiment with addictive substances during these years, their environment is closely linked with their likelihood of doing so. Risk-taking behavior is common among teenagers and young adults, so it's not surprising that they are more likely to be exposed to both legal and illegal substances. Alcohol, marijuana, and nicotine rank as the most commonly used addictive substances among high school students, with underage drinking being a serious problem.

Previous Addiction

The majority of people who have ever been addicted once will go on to develop an addiction again later in life. This is also true of those who have gotten [addiction treatment](#) but returned to old behaviors again thereafter. Once you have developed an addiction, your brain has changed permanently.

Whether it's years or decades after getting sober that this triggers another relapse, the environmental factors which lead you toward one substance or behavior can just as easily lead you toward another addiction. That's why many people who have successfully recovered from one addiction find themselves developing a new addiction not too long after.

The Dangers Of Multiple Addictions

Of course, recovering from an addiction is possible as long as you are dedicated to recovery and treatment. In most cases of recovery, those with addictive tendencies will usually recover from one addiction before moving on to the next.

However, people with multiple addictions tend to relapse more often during recovery periods because they're still struggling with a strong craving for a past addiction when starting a new recovery plan. Multiple addictions also increase your risk of overdose and other harmful consequences that can be fatal, particularly if both substances or behaviors affect your brain function in similar ways. There have been several reported cases of people dying from a fatal overdose after [recovering](#) from one addiction and turning to another substance throughout the years.

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