Substance use disorders

Subjects	Psychiatry and psychotherapy, Psychology and Sociology, Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy
Organ systems	Psyche
Main symptoms	
Summary	In Germany, men consume most substances more frequently and in larger quantities than women. Puberty is the phase in which this sex difference begins to develop: risk factors are higher levels of impulsivity and sensation seeking, especially for boys, with testosterone playing an important role. In girls (and women), female sex hormones contribute to a higher vulnerability of depressive and anxious symptoms. Substance use therefore often serves as a (dysfunctional) coping strategy or emotion regulation for women, while men tend to use for pleasure. Female sex hormones are also seen as a cause of the so-called telescoping effect. This means that women develop addiction more quickly and go through typical phases of substance use earlier and at an accelerated rate. Women are more vulnerable to most toxic effects of substances, i.e. despite lower consumption, medical consequences occur earlier and are more pronounced. In addition, gender differences have been shown in the effects of individual drugs. For example, women often have stronger side effects than men. Adjusting the medication dose to the respective sex (or at least to the body weight) could partly counteract this. Society still classifies addiction as a typically "male" disorder (similar to depression being considered a typically "female" disorder), which is why many women avoid seeking treatment. In medicine, moreover, the course of addiction in men is considered standard for both sexes. A rethink is urgently needed. ## Similiar articles • nicotine addiction • alcohol addiction
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