

SUBSTANCE USE

DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

FAST FACTS

13%

13% of Americans started or increased substance use to cope with stress or emotions related to COVID-19.¹



18%

The early pandemic months brought an 18% increase in US overdoses compared with the same months in 2019.¹



Some substance users may have started **new drugs** (substances) if their usual substances have become more difficult to access.¹

1/5

Nearly 1 in 5 Americans report “**heavy drinking**” to cope with pandemic stress.²



36%

36% of workers say an **addiction or substance use** issue has affected them more since the pandemic began.³



40+

Opioid-related mortality has increased in 40+ US states with ongoing concerns for those with substance use disorders (SUDs).¹



Drivers For The Increase In Substance Use

Pandemic-related strains such as:

- 1 Economic stress¹
- 2 Loneliness¹
- 3 General anxiety about the virus¹

WAYS TO HELP

The PsychU Community Can Consider:



Making a habit of **asking all patients about any substance use**, not just those with a SUD diagnosis.¹



Encouraging patients to participate in **virtual community support groups**.¹



Extending compassion if a patient says they have been using. Help them to (a) understand how stressors may influence substance use, and (b) identify better ways to cope.¹



Coordinating care with other providers as needed for patients with a SUD diagnosis, focusing on adding as much structure and support to their patients' routine as possible.¹

Visit The Substance Use Disorders Library At PsychU.org

1. American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *Substance Use During The Pandemic*. Monitor on Psychology. Retrieved October 8, 2021, from <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/03/substance-use-pandemic>.

2. Hauck, G. (2021, September 22). *Americans Are Using Alcohol To Cope With Pandemic Stress: Nearly 1 In 5 Report 'Heavy Drinking'*. USA Today. Retrieved October 8, 2021, from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2021/09/22/covid-19-pandemic-heavy-drinking-survey-alkermes/5798036001/>.

3. The Standard. November 2020. *COVID-19 Pandemic Impact On Behavioral Health In The Workplace*. [Infographic]. StanCorp Financial Group. <https://www.standard.com/eforms/21962.pdf>