



Addiction is particularly destructive for skilled and licensed professionals due to the demands and expectations in their work.

This guide will provide timely information for Nurses struggling with drug and alcohol addiction.



# Nurses and Addiction Treatment

## Introduction

Nurses are known for their compassionate nature and willingness to put others before themselves. Countless nurses went into the field based on these characteristics and have worked hard to establish themselves as respected professionals. And, while they are highly regarded throughout the country, these professionals are not immune from experiencing some very stressful and harmful setbacks, including the development of a substance use disorder.

When someone has a substance use disorder, regardless of their profession, it means that they are struggling with the disease of addiction. Despite worldwide stigma, addiction is not a choice but rather a chronic, relapsing disorder of the brain.

People do not usually set out with the intention of becoming addicted to drugs and/or alcohol, but it is something that can develop as time passes. Once someone is addicted to alcohol or drugs, getting sober can be difficult.

Given their backgrounds as healthcare professionals, nurses are not blind to the fact that substance use disorders occur amongst them at an unfortunately high rate. Many nurses are accustomed to recognizing the symptoms of a substance use disorder in patients, so, when a co-worker is displaying similar symptoms and behaviors, it can be simple to spot.

The stakes are high for nurses who continue to practice while struggling with a substance use disorder. In some professions, employees are more likely to maintain their jobs after receiving treatment, regardless of if they admitted their use to their boss or whether they were caught red-handed. Still, if a nurse is caught abusing drugs or alcohol, loss of career could result. The devastation that comes with this outcome can be devastating.

Luckily, nurses do not need to suffer in silence, nor do they need to be fearful of losing everything they have worked for. Help is available.

At JourneyPure, we understand how one's profession can serve as a catalyst for their substance use disorder. We see it all the time.



## Some Statistics

There are 3.9 million nurses throughout the country. This includes licensed practical nurses, intensive care nurses, NICU nurses, emergency room nurses, pediatric nurses, school nurses, and many other types in

the field. The majority of the nurse community does not experience substance use disorder firsthand, but a shockingly large number do.

According to most recent data, one in every 10 nurses struggles with a substance use disorder, accounting for 10 percent of the professional nurse population. Nurses number among the most addicted professionals in the country, alongside lawyers, dentists, police officers, pilots, and military veterans. Each of these professions is known for its stressors, and the nursing profession is no different.

Today, roughly 7 percent of nurses abuse prescription painkillers, which surpasses the national rate of opioid abuse. Alcohol is a top substance of abuse for nurses, as 83 percent reported having taken alcohol at least once within the past year.

While many nurses drink responsibly, there are others who cannot. It has been reported that upwards of 80 percent of nurses addicted to alcohol had at least one biological family member who struggled with alcoholism, showcasing the strong genetic link between substance use disorders across all professions. It is also not uncommon for nurses to abuse other addictive substances, including cocaine, marijuana, amphetamines, heroin, inhalants, and sedatives.

Of course, no two people—regardless of profession—experience addiction the same way. It is therefore quite possible for one nurse to abuse alcohol while another is dependent on heroin. Other differences related to substance abuse amongst nurses include work environment and the level of care they provide their patients.



Being a nurse can be extremely stressful, regardless of what type of nurse one is.

## Risk Factors of Addiction in Nurses

Nurses experience unique challenges in their work environment, simply because of what they do. At the same time, nurses are just like everyone else in that they have their own personal genetic and biological makeup that helps define who they are.

When it comes to substance abuse and addiction in general, the most common risk factors include environmental and biological factors. However, nurses experience other risk factors. These include:

- Fatigue. Nurses are known for the long shifts that they pull, and some shifts scheduled back-to-back or

overnight. The exhaustion nurses can feel contributes to their interest in consuming stimulants such as Adderall, Ritalin, or cocaine so that they can stay awake for shifts or for events occurring in their personal lives.

- Access. All nurses have access to prescription medications, which increases their risk for abusing them. Anyone regularly exposed to an easily accessible source of drugs can be tempted to take some for themselves. Nurses are no different.
- Stress. Being a nurse can be extremely stressful, regardless of what type of nurse one is. Patients rely on nurses to keep them healthy and, in many cases, alive. The stress that often comes from putting so much effort into maintaining patients' health, plus the stress that comes from working in such an intense environment, can lead to anxiety, fatigue, emotional breakdowns, and other issues that have the potential to trigger the onset of a substance use disorder.

As mentioned before, many people are biologically wired for addiction. This means their genetics play a part in their risk for developing the disease of addiction. Nurses with blood relatives who have addictions or past histories of mental health problems are automatically at increased risk for substance abuse and addiction.

When someone has a substance use disorder, regardless of their profession, it means that they are struggling with the disease of addiction.



## Professional Addiction Treatment for Nurses at JourneyPure

At JourneyPure, we understand how one's profession can serve as a catalyst for their substance use disorder. We see it all the time.

We are also highly compassionate and invested in each one of our patients. Knowing just how many nurses are affected by substance use disorders, we are proud to offer specialized treatment for this population.

The Healers Program is a treatment program focused on the specific issues and needs nurses have when experiencing a substance use disorder. When a nurse in need of treatment comes to JourneyPure, we provide him or her with a three-day-long evaluation that includes a clinical interview, a biopsychosocial assessment, psychiatric consultation, health and wellness assessment, and a full physical.

Once these are completed, clients begin receiving customized treatment that addresses their needs and

helps them regain their career standing.

Throughout the treatment process, our nurse clients will have access to all of the services we provide for our other clients, including detox, therapies, and aftercare options. From the moment they begin treatment with us to the moment they graduate from the program and get back to their everyday lives, we help guide each and every nurse who comes our way so that he or she can change his or her life for the better.

If you are in need of professional help, reach out to JourneyPure right now. We can help you put a stop to your substance use disorder.