



National Institute on Drug Abuse  
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/>

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### **NIDA Unveils its First Consumer Publication to Explain the Science of Addiction**

Booklet's Release Timed to Complement Collaborative Documentary on Addiction to Air on HBO.

"Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction" was unveiled today by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), a component of the National Institutes of Health. The 30-page full-color booklet explains in layman's terms how science has revolutionized the understanding of drug addiction as a brain disease that affects behavior. NIDA hopes this new publication will help reduce stigma against addictive disorders.

"Thanks to science, our views and our responses to drug abuse have changed dramatically, but many people today still do not understand why people become addicted to drugs or how drugs change the brain to foster compulsive drug abuse," said NIDA Director Dr. Nora D. Volkow. "This booklet aims to fill that knowledge gap by providing scientific information about the disease of drug addiction in language that is easily understandable to the public."

The "Science of Addiction" booklet discusses the reasons people take drugs, why some people become addicted while others do not, how drugs work in the brain, and how addiction can be prevented and treated. Like diabetes, asthma or heart disease, drug addiction is a chronic disease that can be managed successfully. Treatment helps to counteract addiction's powerful disruptive effects and helps people regain control of their lives. The new booklet points out that just as with other chronic diseases, relapses can happen. The publication further explains that relapse is not a signal of treatment failure—rather, it indicates that treatment should be reinstated or adjusted to help the addict fully recover.

The new publication was unveiled today at a press briefing for the upcoming HBO documentary called *Addiction*, to air Thursday, March 15 from 9:00 to 10:30 p.m. ET/PT. The 90-minute program, produced in partnership with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), is aimed at helping Americans understand addiction as a treatable brain disease, as well as spotlighting new medical advancements.

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The documentary will explore many elements of drug and alcohol addiction, through the eyes of those who are addicted and those of the scientific experts working to better understand and treat this devastating disease.

Abuse and addiction to alcohol, nicotine and illegal substances cost Americans upwards of half a trillion dollars a year, considering their combined medical, economic, criminal, and social impact. In addition, every year, abuse of illicit drugs and alcohol contributes to the deaths of more than 100,000 Americans, while tobacco is linked to an estimated 440,000 deaths per year in the United States. People of all ages suffer the harmful consequences of drug abuse and addiction.

Drug addiction is considered a brain disease because drugs change the brain in structure and in function. For most people, the initial decision to take drugs is voluntary, but over time drug abuse can cause changes to the brain that impair a person's self-control and ability to make sound decisions, while sending intense impulses to take drugs.

A PDF copy of "The Science of Addiction" can be downloaded at the NIDA website:  
<http://www.drugabuse.gov>

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The National Institute on Drug Abuse is a component of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIDA supports most of the world's research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. The Institute carries out a large variety of programs to ensure the rapid dissemination of research information and its implementation in policy and practice. Fact sheets on the health effects of drugs of abuse and information on NIDA research and other activities can be found on the NIDA home page at [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov).

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) — *The Nation's Medical Research Agency* — includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary Federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov).