Drug Menace - Worldwide & India

What is Drug Abuse?

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- World Health Organisation defines Drug Abuse as the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs.
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- Addiction is an advanced stage of substance abuse where the addict develops a compulsion to take the drug, persists in its use despite harmful consequences and exhibits a determination to obtain the drug by almost any means.
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- Psychoactive substance use can lead to dependence syndrome - a cluster of behavioural, cognitive, and physiological phenomena, which are marked by social withdrawal.
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- Symptoms of addiction include loss of appetite and weight, loss of interest in day to day work, sweating, reddening of eyes, nausea or vomiting and body pain, drowsiness or sleeplessness and passivity, acute anxiety, depression, mood swings among others.
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What are the implications of Drugs for a society?

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- Drug abuse is one of the most serious health problems faced by the world today which not only destroys the person involved, but his entire family, the society and the nation at large & spawns antisocial behaviour such as stealing, crime and violence.
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- Drug abuse adversely affects the economic growth of a country by generating un-accounted money in large quantity that are also often used to fund terror and anti national activities and therefore posing a serious threat to the national security too.
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- In 1987 the United Nations decided to observe June 26th as ‘International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit trafficking’, to sensitize the people in general and the youth in particular, to the menace of drugs.
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- About 230 million people across the globe use an illegal drug at least once a year and about 27 million people use drugs in a manner that exposes them to very severe health problems.
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- The U.N. estimates that illicit drug use causes over 2 lakh deaths globally, most of them being in their mid 30’s.
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- Thus, illicit drug use is largely a youth phenomenon in today’s world which increases during the adolescence and reaches its peak among persons aged 18-25.
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How does India’s Drug Abuse landscape look?

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- According to a survey by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, India has more than 70 million drug addicts.
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- Different drugs are prevalent in different states of the country accounting for 1.62% of the world’s seizures of illegal drugs.
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- Our country records about 10 suicides daily due to drug or alcohol addiction and there were 3,647 such suicide cases in the country in 2014 with Maharashtra reported the highest such cases, followed by Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
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- Proximity to the largest producers of heroin - the Golden Triangle (Southeast Asia) and Golden Crescent (Afghanistan - Pakistan & Iran) is one of the main reasons for drug trafficking in India. Additionally, Nepal is a also a traditional source of cannabis.
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- India is both a destination and a transit route for drug traffickers in these regions.
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- As a consequence of cross border smuggling, India has been affected with narco-terrorism.
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What are the government's initiatives against drug abuse?

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- Article 47 of the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution of India directs state to improve public health & endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption of intoxicating drinks & drugs which are injurious to health.
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- India is also a party to the three United Nations drug conventions - Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961), Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971), Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988).
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- To tackle the problem of illegal drugs, the Parliament passed 'Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act' of 1985 as a comprehensive legislation on narcotics, providing for stringent and long term prison sentences and heavy fines for offenders.
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- Similarly, the parliament also passed the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1988.
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- Government has adopted a multi pronged strategy to deal with drugs control by establishing enforcement agencies like Narcotic Control Bureau (NCB), Narcotics Control Division, Department of Central excise & customs, revenue intelligence & para-military and armed forces.
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- It has also constituted a joint committee to curb the menace of drug smuggling into India along international borders, which comprises four central ministries - Home Affairs, Health, Finance and Social Justice & Empowerment.
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What is the role of 'Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment'?

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- It is the nodal ministry for drug demand reduction that coordinates and monitors all aspects of drug abuse prevention which include assessment of the extent of the problem, preventive action, treatment and rehabilitation of

addicts.
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- It has the responsibility of creating awareness, educating people about the ill effects of drug abuse, its identification and rehabilitation.
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- It supports activities of non-governmental organisations, working in the areas of prevention of addiction and rehabilitation of addicts and also funds Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), etc.
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- The Ministry has been implementing the Scheme of Prevention of Alcoholism and Substance (Drug) Abuse since 1985, which stresses on developing culture-specific models for the prevention of addiction and treatment and rehabilitation of addicts.
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- Presently, about 350 to 400 Integrated Rehabilitation Centres for Addicts (IRCAs) are functioning with the support of the Ministry.
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- National Centre for Drug Abuse Prevention has been set up for capacity building and training of NGOs running De-addiction centres.
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What does the comprehensive drug survey of 2004 say?

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- While the next survey is expected to be out in 2018, in 2004, the Ministry and the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime jointly released the National Survey on the Extent, Pattern and Trends of Drug Abuse in India.
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- **Major highlights** of the survey were - Alcohol, cannabis and opiates are the major substances of abuse in India & the hazards and burden on women due to drug abuse is significant.
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- Prevalence of drug abuse among males the general population is significant while it does among women too.
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- Number of dependent users ‘not in treatment’ is significant & drug abuse as an exclusively urban phenomenon is a myth.
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- **Major recommendations** by the study were - Attracting drug users to treatment, scaling up peer-led interventions & community based services.
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- Developing programmes for vulnerable groups like youth, street children,

women, prisons, etc.
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- Enhancing skills of care providers. Improve service delivery.
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- Funding for evidence-based interventions.
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