

WHAT AFFECTS THE RISK FOR ADDICTION?



Scientists have identified many of the factors that can increase—and decrease—a person’s risk for addiction.

Risk factors can increase the likelihood of becoming addicted to alcohol, tobacco, and/or other drugs. They include biological factors—such as a person’s genetics and gender—and factors that come from the environment, including peer pressure or family relationships. **Protective factors** are biological or environmental factors that help to decrease a person’s risk for addiction, such as strong community bonds and friends who are a positive influence.

In general, the more risk factors and the fewer protective factors a person has, the higher the chance for addiction. However, every individual is different. A person can still become addicted to drugs even if he or she has few risk factors. And most people who are at risk never become addicted to drugs. Study the table at the right to learn about some of the factors that affect the risk for addiction.

Directions: Study the information in the table below. Then use it along with the information from the article “How Do Genes Affect Addiction?” to answer the questions below. Write your answers on separate paper.

Risk and Protective Factors for Addiction

 RISK FACTORS	 PROTECTIVE FACTORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family history of addiction • Lack of parental supervision • Lack of strong family bonds • Friends or family who use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs • Availability of drugs • Drug use during adolescence • Mental health problems such as depression • Stress • Exposure to trauma or violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong family bonds • Parental supervision and involvement • Friends who are a positive influence and don’t use drugs • Strong neighborhood/community • Clear anti-drug use policies at home and in school • Strong performance in school • Participation in after-school activities • Having strategies to cope with stress

QUESTIONS:

1. Explain the difference between a protective factor and a risk factor for addiction. Give at least one example of each.
2. Suppose a person has no family history of drug addiction and has strong bonds with his or her parents. Is it guaranteed that the person will not become addicted to drugs or alcohol themselves? Support your answer with evidence from the texts.
3. Suppose a person has uncontrollable risk factors for addiction, such as a genetic history of the disease. How can the person reduce his or her own risk? Explain at least two specific actions that can be taken.