

# NCLEX Substance Abuse Practice Test (Sample)

## Study Guide



**Everything you need from our exam experts!**

**Copyright © 2026 by Examzify - A Kaluba Technologies Inc. product.**

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.**

**No part of this book may be reproduced or transferred in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, web distribution, taping, or by any information storage retrieval system, without the written permission of the author.**

**Notice: Examzify makes every reasonable effort to obtain accurate, complete, and timely information about this product from reliable sources.**

**SAMPLE**

# Table of Contents

<b>Copyright</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>How to Use This Guide</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Questions</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Answers</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Explanations</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Next Steps</b> .....	<b>16</b>

SAMPLE

# Introduction

Preparing for a certification exam can feel overwhelming, but with the right tools, it becomes an opportunity to build confidence, sharpen your skills, and move one step closer to your goals. At Examzify, we believe that effective exam preparation isn't just about memorization, it's about understanding the material, identifying knowledge gaps, and building the test-taking strategies that lead to success.

This guide was designed to help you do exactly that.

Whether you're preparing for a licensing exam, professional certification, or entry-level qualification, this book offers structured practice to reinforce key concepts. You'll find a wide range of multiple-choice questions, each followed by clear explanations to help you understand not just the right answer, but why it's correct.

The content in this guide is based on real-world exam objectives and aligned with the types of questions and topics commonly found on official tests. It's ideal for learners who want to:

- Practice answering questions under realistic conditions,
- Improve accuracy and speed,
- Review explanations to strengthen weak areas, and
- Approach the exam with greater confidence.

We recommend using this book not as a stand-alone study tool, but alongside other resources like flashcards, textbooks, or hands-on training. For best results, we recommend working through each question, reflecting on the explanation provided, and revisiting the topics that challenge you most.

**Remember:** successful test preparation isn't about getting every question right the first time, it's about learning from your mistakes and improving over time. Stay focused, trust the process, and know that every page you turn brings you closer to success.

Let's begin.

# How to Use This Guide

**This guide is designed to help you study more effectively and approach your exam with confidence. Whether you're reviewing for the first time or doing a final refresh, here's how to get the most out of your Examzify study guide:**

## **1. Start with a Diagnostic Review**

**Skim through the questions to get a sense of what you know and what you need to focus on. Your goal is to identify knowledge gaps early.**

## **2. Study in Short, Focused Sessions**

**Break your study time into manageable blocks (e.g. 30 - 45 minutes). Review a handful of questions, reflect on the explanations.**

## **3. Learn from the Explanations**

**After answering a question, always read the explanation, even if you got it right. It reinforces key points, corrects misunderstandings, and teaches subtle distinctions between similar answers.**

## **4. Track Your Progress**

**Use bookmarks or notes (if reading digitally) to mark difficult questions. Revisit these regularly and track improvements over time.**

## **5. Simulate the Real Exam**

**Once you're comfortable, try taking a full set of questions without pausing. Set a timer and simulate test-day conditions to build confidence and time management skills.**

## **6. Repeat and Review**

**Don't just study once, repetition builds retention. Re-attempt questions after a few days and revisit explanations to reinforce learning. Pair this guide with other Examzify tools like flashcards, and digital practice tests to strengthen your preparation across formats.**

**There's no single right way to study, but consistent, thoughtful effort always wins. Use this guide flexibly, adapt the tips above to fit your pace and learning style. You've got this!**

## Questions

SAMPLE

- 1. A nurse is working with a client on recognizing the relationship between alcohol abuse and interpersonal problems. Which of the following is the priority intervention?**
  - A. Help the client identify personal strengths.**
  - B. Help the client decrease compulsive behaviors.**
  - C. Examine the client's use of defense mechanisms.**
  - D. Have the client work with peers who can serve as role models.**
  
- 2. What should be a priority for healthcare staff when dealing with patients recovering from substance use?**
  - A. Encouraging dependencies on family members.**
  - B. Promoting independence and self-efficacy.**
  - C. Limiting discussions to physical health only.**
  - D. Removing all external influences.**
  
- 3. What is a common effect experienced by users of hallucinogenic drugs?**
  - A. Increased appetite**
  - B. Altered sensory perception**
  - C. Enhanced physical endurance**
  - D. Improved memory recall**
  
- 4. What effect does alcohol have on the body?**
  - A. Brain stimulation**
  - B. Liver damage**
  - C. Muscle gain**
  - D. Increased hydration**
  
- 5. What is the primary pharmacological treatment for opioid addiction?**
  - A. Buprenorphine**
  - B. Naltrexone**
  - C. Methadone**
  - D. Disulfiram**

- 6. How can a nurse best support a colleague who is suspected of having a substance abuse problem?**
- A. Encourage them to seek help while maintaining confidentiality**
  - B. Report the colleague to higher management immediately**
  - C. Confront the colleague publicly to ensure they receive help**
  - D. Avoid discussing the issue to prevent embarrassment**
- 7. Which neurotransmitter is most often associated with feelings of reward and pleasure?**
- A. Norepinephrine**
  - B. Dopamine**
  - C. Serotonin**
  - D. Acetylcholine**
- 8. What does CIWA stand for regarding alcohol withdrawal?**
- A. Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment**
  - B. Comprehensive Integration of Withdrawal Assessment**
  - C. Clinical Intervention for Withdrawal Arrangements**
  - D. Coordinated Institute for Wellness Assessment**
- 9. Which of the following is a common psychological effect of chronic alcohol use?**
- A. Euphoria**
  - B. Anxiety**
  - C. Excessive confidence**
  - D. Depression**
- 10. Why is it essential to address substance abuse early in treatment?**
- A. It can reduce the need for therapy**
  - B. Early intervention can prevent further complications and promote recovery**
  - C. It allows patients to avoid medications**
  - D. It ensures immediate detoxification**

## Answers

SAMPLE

1. C
2. B
3. B
4. B
5. C
6. A
7. B
8. A
9. D
10. B

SAMPLE

## **Explanations**

SAMPLE

1. A nurse is working with a client on recognizing the relationship between alcohol abuse and interpersonal problems. Which of the following is the priority intervention?
  - A. Help the client identify personal strengths.
  - B. Help the client decrease compulsive behaviors.
  - C. Examine the client's use of defense mechanisms.**
  - D. Have the client work with peers who can serve as role models.

The priority intervention in this scenario focuses on examining the client's use of defense mechanisms. Understanding defense mechanisms is crucial for clients dealing with alcohol abuse, as these psychological strategies often serve as coping mechanisms to handle stress, anxiety, and unresolved interpersonal issues. By examining how the client uses these mechanisms, the nurse can help the client gain insight into their behaviors and thought patterns, which may allow them to recognize maladaptive ways of coping. This process can facilitate self-awareness and promote healthier coping strategies, ultimately leading to improved interpersonal relationships. Addressing these underlying psychological elements is foundational for effective treatment and recovery, making this intervention a priority. Other options, while beneficial in their own right, do not directly address the root psychological concerns that often drive substance abuse. Identifying personal strengths, decreasing compulsive behaviors, and working with peers for role modeling can all be integral parts of a comprehensive treatment plan, but they may not have the immediate impact of understanding and addressing the defense mechanisms in place.

2. What should be a priority for healthcare staff when dealing with patients recovering from substance use?
  - A. Encouraging dependencies on family members.
  - B. Promoting independence and self-efficacy.**
  - C. Limiting discussions to physical health only.
  - D. Removing all external influences.

Promoting independence and self-efficacy is crucial when dealing with patients recovering from substance use because these elements empower individuals to take control of their recovery process. Building self-efficacy involves helping patients develop the confidence and skills needed to manage their substance use, make healthy decisions, and cope with challenges. This approach not only supports recovery but also fosters a sense of personal responsibility and accountability. Supporting independence means guiding patients to rely on their own abilities rather than depending on others, which can ultimately lead to healthier coping mechanisms and a reduced risk of relapse. Encouraging patients to engage in activities that promote self-care, decision-making, and problem-solving fosters resilience and equips them with strategies to face cravings or difficult situations in the future. In contrast, relying on family members for dependency can create an unhealthy dynamic that may lead to co-dependency, and limiting discussions to just physical health ignores the psychological and social aspects of recovery. Additionally, removing all external influences may not be practical or beneficial, as social support can play a positive role in recovery when handled appropriately. Focusing on independence and self-efficacy creates a stronger foundation for sustained recovery and personal growth.

### 3. What is a common effect experienced by users of hallucinogenic drugs?

- A. Increased appetite
- B. Altered sensory perception**
- C. Enhanced physical endurance
- D. Improved memory recall

Users of hallucinogenic drugs often experience altered sensory perception, which is a hallmark effect of these substances. This alteration can manifest as changes in how a person perceives sights, sounds, and even time. For example, colors may appear more vibrant, sounds might seem more intense, and users may experience visual or auditory hallucinations. These perceptual changes can create a distinct psychological experience that significantly differs from normal perception, leading to varying emotional and cognitive responses. This effect is a core reason why hallucinogens are often explored in therapeutic settings for their potential in treating conditions like PTSD or depression, as they can facilitate new perspectives and insights. Understanding this can help recognize the profound impact that hallucinogens can have on one's perception of reality.

### 4. What effect does alcohol have on the body?

- A. Brain stimulation
- B. Liver damage**
- C. Muscle gain
- D. Increased hydration

The choice indicating liver damage accurately reflects a significant effect of alcohol on the body. Chronic alcohol consumption can lead to a range of liver problems, including fatty liver, alcoholic hepatitis, and cirrhosis. These conditions occur because the liver is responsible for metabolizing alcohol, and excessive intake can overwhelm its capacity, resulting in inflammation, scarring, and impaired liver function over time. Addressing liver health is crucial for individuals who consume alcohol regularly, as long-term damage can lead to serious health issues. Conversely, the other options do not represent effects typically associated with alcohol consumption. While some individuals may experience initial stimulating effects in small amounts, the overall impact of alcohol is more accurately characterized by its depressant qualities, which can impair cognitive and motor functions. Alcohol is also not associated with muscle gain, as it can lead to a decrease in muscle protein synthesis and recovery due to its interference with hormone production and energy balance. Lastly, alcohol is a diuretic, leading to increased fluid loss and dehydration rather than improved hydration. Understanding the impact of alcohol on the body is essential for recognizing the potential health risks associated with its consumption.

**5. What is the primary pharmacological treatment for opioid addiction?**

- A. Buprenorphine**
- B. Naltrexone**
- C. Methadone**
- D. Disulfiram**

The primary pharmacological treatment for opioid addiction is methadone. Methadone is a long-acting synthetic opioid that works as a substitute for more potent opioids, helping to alleviate withdrawal symptoms and cravings without providing the intense high associated with opioids like heroin or prescription painkillers. This stabilization allows individuals to engage in counseling and rehabilitation without the urge to seek out illicit substances. Methadone reduces the risk of overdose and helps to decrease illegal opioid use while enabling patients to gradually taper off dependence. In the context of opioid addiction management, it's important to recognize that other options like buprenorphine and naltrexone play supportive roles but are not considered the primary treatment. Buprenorphine is a partial opioid agonist that can also be used effectively in addiction treatment, often in combination with naloxone to prevent misuse. Naltrexone, an opioid antagonist, can help prevent relapse but is typically used after detoxification to maintain abstinence rather than as an initial treatment. Disulfiram, which is used for alcohol use disorder, is not relevant in the context of opioid addiction treatment.

**6. How can a nurse best support a colleague who is suspected of having a substance abuse problem?**

- A. Encourage them to seek help while maintaining confidentiality**
- B. Report the colleague to higher management immediately**
- C. Confront the colleague publicly to ensure they receive help**
- D. Avoid discussing the issue to prevent embarrassment**

Encouraging a colleague to seek help while maintaining confidentiality is essential when dealing with a suspected substance abuse problem. This approach provides a safe and supportive environment for the colleague, allowing them to feel secure in discussing their struggles without fear of judgment or repercussion. Confidentiality is paramount in these situations, as it fosters trust and encourages the individual to take the necessary steps toward recovery. By offering support rather than confrontation or public scrutiny, the nurse not only respects the colleague's dignity but also promotes a culture of understanding and compassion within the workplace. This supportive stance can significantly influence the colleague's decision to seek assistance for their issues. In contrast, reporting the colleague to higher management could lead to negative consequences without providing the individual with the opportunity to address their problem constructively. Publicly confronting the colleague can cause significant embarrassment and may further isolate them, making recovery more difficult. Avoiding discussions altogether, on the other hand, denies the colleague the necessary support and intervention that could help them seek treatment. The chosen approach is aligned with best practices for supporting individuals with such challenges in a healthcare setting, promoting healing rather than shame.

**7. Which neurotransmitter is most often associated with feelings of reward and pleasure?**

- A. Norepinephrine**
- B. Dopamine**
- C. Serotonin**
- D. Acetylcholine**

Dopamine is the neurotransmitter most commonly linked to feelings of reward and pleasure. This connection is primarily established in parts of the brain associated with the reward pathway, such as the mesolimbic system. When an individual engages in activities that are pleasurable, such as eating, socializing, or engaging in hobbies, dopamine is released. This release reinforces the behavior, making the person more likely to engage in it again in the future, which is a fundamental aspect of learning and motivation. In addition to its role in pleasure, dopamine is also involved in regulating mood and emotional responses, as well as motor function. Its dysregulation is often implicated in various mental health disorders, including addiction, where the reward pathway becomes hijacked by substances that artificially increase dopamine levels. Understanding dopamine's primary role in the reward system is crucial for recognizing how substance abuse can create cycles of addiction. This knowledge is foundational for nursing professionals when assessing, treating, and educating patients about the effects of substances on the brain and behavior.

**8. What does CIWA stand for regarding alcohol withdrawal?**

- A. Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment**
- B. Comprehensive Integration of Withdrawal Assessment**
- C. Clinical Intervention for Withdrawal Arrangements**
- D. Coordinated Institute for Wellness Assessment**

The correct answer is "Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment." CIWA is a standardized tool used to assess the severity of alcohol withdrawal symptoms and determine the appropriate level of treatment. This assessment includes various criteria such as tremors, sweating, anxiety, agitation, and changes in sensorium, which help healthcare providers gauge how intensely the patient is experiencing withdrawal. By using a structured scale like CIWA, clinicians can more effectively monitor patient needs and adjust interventions accordingly, ensuring a more holistic and responsive approach to managing alcohol withdrawal. Understanding this acronym is crucial for nursing professionals in order to provide timely and effective care for patients undergoing withdrawal, which can sometimes lead to serious complications if not managed appropriately.

**9. Which of the following is a common psychological effect of chronic alcohol use?**

- A. Euphoria**
- B. Anxiety**
- C. Excessive confidence**
- D. Depression**

Chronic alcohol use is often linked to various psychological effects, one of the most significant being depression. Long-term consumption of alcohol can lead to changes in brain chemistry that contribute to feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a lack of interest in previously enjoyable activities. This depressive symptomatology can be exacerbated by the social and personal consequences of alcohol abuse, such as strained relationships, financial difficulties, and legal issues. In the context of substance use, many individuals might initially experience euphoria or heightened confidence due to alcohol's effects on the central nervous system. However, these effects are typically transient and can lead to a depressive state as the body adjusts to prolonged alcohol exposure. As alcohol disrupts the balance of neurotransmitters critical for mood regulation, it increases vulnerability to depressive episodes as tolerance develops and withdrawal symptoms emerge. Understanding these psychological effects is crucial for healthcare providers in order to identify, assess, and treat individuals struggling with alcohol use disorder effectively.

**10. Why is it essential to address substance abuse early in treatment?**

- A. It can reduce the need for therapy**
- B. Early intervention can prevent further complications and promote recovery**
- C. It allows patients to avoid medications**
- D. It ensures immediate detoxification**

Addressing substance abuse early in treatment is crucial because early intervention can significantly prevent further complications and promote the overall recovery process. By identifying and addressing substance abuse at its onset, healthcare providers can work to mitigate the associated health risks, both physical and psychological, that may arise as a consequence of prolonged substance use. Early intervention can help in several ways. It allows for the timely implementation of therapeutic strategies, which can lead to better health outcomes and a higher likelihood of sustained recovery. Furthermore, addressing substance abuse early can engage individuals in a supportive recovery process sooner, creating opportunities to build coping mechanisms and resilience before the problems escalate into more serious issues such as addiction, co-occurring mental health disorders, or severe physical health problems. While other options mention aspects of treatment, they do not encapsulate the broader importance of early intervention in preventing complications and fostering a more effective recovery trajectory. By focusing on early treatment, individuals have a better chance of returning to a healthier state of living with the support necessary to maintain sobriety and well-being.

# Next Steps

**Congratulations on reaching the final section of this guide. You've taken a meaningful step toward passing your certification exam and advancing your career.**

**As you continue preparing, remember that consistent practice, review, and self-reflection are key to success. Make time to revisit difficult topics, simulate exam conditions, and track your progress along the way.**

**If you need help, have suggestions, or want to share feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our team at [hello@examzify.com](mailto:hello@examzify.com).**

**Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:**

**<https://nclexsubstanceabuse.examzify.com>**

**We wish you the very best on your exam journey. You've got this!**

SAMPLE