

What are some other things I should talk about with my doctor or therapist?

- Your treatment goals
- How to safely minimize alcohol drinking and decrease withdrawal effects
- The different medication options
- Your treatment schedule
- How counseling works
- Who you should contact about support groups
- What could happen if you stop taking medicine or stop attending counseling sessions
- How you can afford treatment and whether your insurance will cover treatment
- What will happen if you relapse
- Whether the medicine will interact with your other meds
- How you can have the best chance of success while taking the medicine
- How your family or friends can help you in your recovery

Who can I contact for help?

Substance Abuse Service Helpline

 (844) 804-7500

Alcoholics Anonymous

 www.aa.org

National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence

 (800) 622-2255

Families Anonymous

 (800) 736-9805

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

 (800) 273-8255

Alcoholics Anonymous—Online Chat Meetings

 aa-intergroup.org/directory_chat.php

Medication Treatment for Alcohol Use Disorder



What is medication for alcohol use disorder?

Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is a tool to help people with alcohol use disorder gain control over their drinking, allowing them to concentrate on the root cause of their drinking and limiting the temptation to drink. Medicine is used along with counseling and behavioral therapy. Medicine does not always guarantee a fast treatment process, but MAT has been shown to help patients:

- Reduce alcohol cravings
- Regain a more stable state of mind, free from the highs and lows that come with alcohol use
- Create changes that lead to a healthier lifestyle

Some people with AUD worry that replacing alcohol with medicine is just changing one form of addiction for another. But that's not the case. Used properly, these medicines do not create a new addiction. With the help of your doctor, medicine can be used as a stepping stone to a lifestyle free from all substances.

What medicines are used for treatment of AUD?

Some medicines used to treat co-occurring alcohol use disorder (COD-alcohol) include the following:

- Oral naltrexone
- Disulfiram
- Acamprosate

You can work with your doctor to decide which medicine is right for you. All medicines work toward the same goal of helping you with recovery.

How long do I have to take the medicine?

Each person's treatment plan will be different and will be based on their personal situation. Some may only need to take medicine for a few months, whereas others may need to take it for years. You should talk with your doctor to figure out what's right for you.

Why is counseling important in treatment?

Medicine can help reduce cravings for alcohol, but the reasons for these cravings need to be understood and explored for you to get better. You are more likely to relapse if you take medicine without working with a counselor, and you may need to stay in treatment longer.

Is it better to treat my mental health disorder or alcohol use disorder first?

It is best to treat both disorders at the same time, but this is not necessary. Some people may not be ready to start treatment for both conditions at the same time. These people may choose to treat one disorder first and then the other.

Can I still drink alcohol while receiving treatment for my mental illness?

Drinking alcohol can make medicines for mental illness treatment less effective, so it's important to get alcohol use under control. There is no single best way of treating someone with a mental illness and alcohol use disorder, so it's important to talk to your doctor to figure out the best way forward for you.

Is it possible to become addicted to these medicines?

No, the medicines used to treat alcohol use disorder are not addictive. Talk to your doctor if you have any specific concerns.

Where should I start?

One of the first steps in connecting to medication treatment for alcohol use disorder is speaking with your doctor or therapist. While the thought of this can make some people feel nervous, it can be comforting to know that doctors and therapists only want to help, and many hear about similar concerns on a regular basis. Your doctor or therapist should be able to provide you with the necessary resources to find the right people to help you on your journey to recovery.