



ALCOHOL

dependency and abuse

Breaking the Chain of Alcohol...

Recovery from Alcohol Dependency & Abuse

If you have picked up this brochure most likely you, or someone you love, is struggling with the damaging effects of alcohol addiction or abuse. Although there are no easy solutions, alcohol treatment can – and does – work for many people. *Recovery is possible and help is available.*

Alcohol dependency (alcoholism) is a chronic disease in which the body is physically dependent on alcohol. Those addicted to alcohol have an inability to control their drinking, even when it causes serious work, financial, health and social problems. They display an increasing tolerance to, and craving for, alcohol - needing more and more to feel the same effect. Soon they drink just to feel okay.

Alcohol abuse is a pattern of drinking that leads to similar health or social problems, but the problem drinker is not *physically* dependent on alcohol. The abuser does not have a complete loss of control over alcohol, but the impact of their drinking can be just as harmful and still require treatment.

Symptoms of Addiction

The symptoms of alcohol addiction or abuse often include:

- Losing interest in other activities that one used to enjoy
- Having problems with work, relationships or finances due to one's drinking
- Irritability if unable to drink
- An inability to control the amount of alcohol one drinks
- Not being able to remember what happened, or "blacking out"
- Drinking alone or "secret drinking"
- Drinking to feel "normal"
- Increasing alcohol tolerance
- Feeling a "compulsion" or need to drink
- Withdrawal symptoms – nausea, insomnia, sweating, shaking – when one doesn't drink

Those *abusing* alcohol may suffer from many of the same symptoms as those who are *addicted* to alcohol, minus the physical dependency that results in severe withdrawal symptoms.

Other Resources

There are a wide variety of organizations that can assist you in finding the help you need. For more information on alcohol addiction or to find help in your area, you can contact the following organizations:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
1-800-662-HELP
(Toll-free, 24-hour helpline to help you locate licensed, certified alcohol treatment facilities in your area)

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence
<http://www.ncadd.org>

Alcoholics Anonymous
www.aa.org

Anonymous Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator:
<http://dasis3.samhsa.gov/>

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Treatment & Recovery

There are numerous treatment options for those struggling with alcohol abuse or addiction. Admitting one has a problem with alcohol is a tremendous first step. The type of treatment required will in large part rely on one's level of dependence or abuse. For some an inpatient or residential program may be necessary while others may find success through an outpatient program or self-help group.

While there is no agreed upon definition of "recovery," the term is generally used to refer to the ongoing process of *overcoming dependency, maintaining sobriety, and improving one's overall personal health.*

Inpatient and Residential Programs

Inpatient programs provide treatment in a hospital setting. **Residential programs** take place in a non-hospital setting such as an addiction treatment center. Both inpatient and residential treatment facilities provide round the clock care that can last between a week and over a month. These programs generally include:

Detoxification and treatment for withdrawal symptoms. Detoxification is an important preliminary step to the recovery process. Detoxification usually takes between four and seven days. Withdrawal symptoms may include nausea, shaking, or sweating. Medication may be used to help minimize these symptoms.

Quitting alcohol abruptly can be dangerous or even fatal for a heavy drinker. If you drink heavily, talk to your physician before you quit. If you or someone you know exhibits signs of *confusion, seizures, hallucinations or delusions*, GET MEDICAL ATTENTION IMMEDIATELY.

Medical evaluation and treatment. Years of alcohol abuse can lead to a number of health-related problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure, liver damage, and heart disease. Most inpatient programs address these issues.

Psychological and/or psychiatric support. Trained substance abuse professionals use a variety of counseling and therapy techniques to treat the issues underlying alcohol abuse. Family members are often encouraged to attend group therapy sessions as part of the recovery process.

Medication. Although medications can help people reduce their alcohol consumption, avoid relapse and maintain abstinence, there is no "magic bullet." A physician can discuss the available medications to see if one of them may be helpful. Medication may also be administered as a part of psychiatric treatment.

Continued support. Many aftercare programs and support groups are available to help maintain sobriety after leaving a treatment facility. Inpatient treatment must often be followed up with outpatient care to address an individual's issues, and to provide the support necessary for ongoing recovery.



Recovery: an ongoing process of overcoming dependency, maintaining sobriety, and improving overall personal health.

Outpatient Programs

For many with less severe alcohol problems, outpatient treatment offers an effective alternative. Like inpatient or residential programs, outpatient programs are designed to help develop abstinence skills and interrupt patterns of addictive behavior. Unlike residential programs, one is generally able to continue with normal activities—such as work or school—while receiving outpatient treatment.

Outpatient programs provide counseling and various other services. They may meet on a weekly basis or, for more intensive programs, several times a week for several hours at a time. As with inpatient and residential programs, counseling sessions will often include family members to help the individual in treatment.

Assistance in Paying for Treatment

For many, the cost of inpatient, residential, or even outpatient treatment can seem daunting. However, there are a number of options available to those who do not have personal savings or family assistance. Many don't realize their private insurance covers drug and alcohol treatment, or that there are a variety of other financial aid options:

- Military insurance
- Medicare or Medicaid
- Employer sponsored programs
- Sliding scale or reduced payment options
- Loans
- Federal, state, or local assistance

Self-Help Groups

Those struggling with an alcohol problem often find self-help support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) essential to staying sober and coping with the disease of alcoholism. These groups offer support for those coming out of formal treatment, or for those who decide against a formalized treatment program. Many in-and-out patient programs require AA participation. Even if it is not mandatory, a support group should be considered.

Built around twelve steps, the AA program emphasizes alcohol abstinence and acceptance of the alcoholic's powerlessness over alcohol. AA is self-supporting and therefore requires no fees to attend meetings, simply a willingness to stay sober. AA has meetings worldwide.

There are other self-help groups that offer alternatives to the twelve-step approach. Information about these support groups can often be obtained by contacting your local government's Department of Health.

Living With an Alcoholic or Alcohol Abuser

There is also help for those affected by another's alcohol abuse. Based on the same twelve steps as Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon and Alateen offer "experience, strength and hope" through the voluntary sharing of stories among members.

Again, information about other groups offering support to family members may often be obtained through your local Department of Health.

You Can Do It

You do not have to suffer from the effects of alcoholism one moment longer. **Help is available**— accept it today and enjoy all of your tomorrows.