

# **Alcohol Use Disorder**

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# Alcohol use disorder

- Alcoholism has been known by a variety of terms, including alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence. Today, it's referred to as alcohol use disorder.
- It occurs when you drink so much that your body eventually becomes dependent on or addicted to alcohol. When this happens, alcohol becomes the most important thing in your life.

# Alcohol use disorder

- People with alcohol use disorder will continue to drink even when drinking causes negative consequences, like losing a job or destroying relationships with people they love.
- They may know that their alcohol use negatively affects their lives, but it's often not enough to make them stop drinking.
- Some people may drink alcohol to the point that it causes problems, but they're not physically dependent on alcohol. This used to be referred to as alcohol abuse.

# Cause

- The cause of alcohol use disorder is still unknown. Alcohol use disorder develops when you drink so much that chemical changes in the brain occur. These changes increase the pleasurable feelings you get when you drink alcohol. This makes you want to drink more often, even if it causes harm.
- Eventually, the pleasurable feelings associated with alcohol use go away and the person with alcohol use disorder will engage in drinking to prevent withdrawal symptoms. These withdrawal symptoms can be quite unpleasant and even dangerous.
- Alcohol use disorder typically develops gradually over time. It's also known to run in families.

# Risk factors

Although the exact cause of alcohol use disorder is unknown, there are certain factors that may increase your risk for developing this disease.

## **Known risk factors include having:**

- more than 15 drinks per week if you're male
- more than 12 drinks per week if you're female
- more than 5 drinks per day at least once a week (**binge drinking** = nárazové pití)
- a parent with alcohol use disorder
- a mental health problem, such as [depression](#), [anxiety](#), or [schizophrenia](#)

# Risk factors

**You may also be at a greater risk for alcohol use disorder if you:**

- are a young adult experiencing peer pressure
- have low self-esteem
- experience a high level of stress
- live in a family or culture where alcohol use is common and accepted
- have a close relative with alcohol use disorder

# Symptoms

- Symptoms of alcohol use disorder are based on the behaviors and physical outcomes that occur as a result of alcohol addiction.
- People with alcohol use disorder may engage in the following behaviors:
  - drinking alone
  - drinking more to feel the effects of alcohol (having a high tolerance)
  - becoming violent or angry when asked about their drinking habits
  - not eating or eating poorly
  - neglecting personal hygiene
  - missing work or school because of drinking
  - being unable to control alcohol intake
  - making excuses to drink
  - continuing to drink even when legal, social, or economic problems develop
  - giving up important social, occupational, or recreational activities because of alcohol use

# Symptoms

- People with alcohol use disorder may also experience the following physical symptoms:
  - alcohol cravings
  - withdrawal symptoms when not drinking, including shaking, nausea, and vomiting
  - tremors (involuntary shaking) the morning after drinking
  - lapses in memory (blacking out) after a night of drinking
  - illnesses, such as alcoholic ketoacidosis (includes dehydration-type symptoms) or cirrhosis



# Self-testing

- Sometimes it can be hard to draw the line between safe alcohol use and the misuse of alcohol.
- [The Mayo Clinic](#) suggests that you may misuse alcohol if you answer “yes” to some of the following questions:
  - Do you need to drink more in order to feel the effects of alcohol?
  - Do you feel guilty about drinking?
  - Do you become irritable or violent when you’re drinking?
  - Do you have problems at school or work because of drinking?
  - Do you think it might be better if you cut back on your drinking?

# Professional diagnosis

- Your doctor may use a questionnaire (or ask questions) that assesses alcohol use disorder to help diagnose your condition.
- Possible questions:
  - Do you drive when you're drunk?
  - Have you missed work or have lost a job as a result of your drinking?
  - Do you need more alcohol to feel “drunk” when you drink?
  - Have you experienced blackouts as a result of your drinking?
  - Have you tried to cut back on your drinking but couldn't?

# Professional diagnosis

- Typically, a diagnosis of alcohol use disorder doesn't require any other type of diagnostic test.
- There's a chance your doctor may order blood work to check your liver function if you show signs or symptoms of liver disease.
- Alcohol use disorder can cause serious and lasting damage to your liver. Your liver is responsible for removing toxins from your blood. When you drink too much, your liver has a harder time filtering the alcohol and other toxins from your bloodstream. This can lead to liver disease and other complications.

# Treatment

- Treatment for alcohol use disorder varies, but each method is meant to help you stop drinking altogether. This is called abstinence.
- You may need to seek treatment at an inpatient facility if your addiction to alcohol is severe.
- These facilities will provide you with 24-hour care as you withdraw from alcohol and recover from your addiction.
- Once you're well enough to leave, you'll need to continue to receive treatment on an outpatient basis.

# Treatment

- Treatment may occur in stages and can include the following:
  - detoxification or withdrawal to rid your body of alcohol
  - rehabilitation to learn new coping skills and behaviors
  - counseling to address emotional problems that may cause you to drink
  - [support groups](#), including 12-step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
  - medical treatment for health problems associated with alcohol use disorder
  - medications to help control addiction

# Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

- The Twelve Steps (1935, Oxford Group) are a set of guiding principles in addiction treatment that outline a course of action for tackling problems including alcoholism, drug addiction and compulsion.

**Step 1:** We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

**Step 2:** Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

**Step 3:** Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.

**Step 4:** Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

**Step 5:** Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

**Step 6:** Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

# Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

- **Step 7:** Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
- **Step 8:** Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- **Step 9:** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- **Step 10:** Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- **Step 11:** Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
- **Step 12:** Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

# Medications to help control addiction

- There are a couple of different medications that may help with alcohol use disorder:
  - **Naltrexone (ReVia)** is used only after someone has detoxed from alcohol. This type of drug works by blocking certain receptors in the brain that are associated with the alcoholic “high.” This type of drug, in combination with counseling, may help decrease a person’s craving for alcohol.
  - **Acamprosate** is a medication that can help re-establish the brain’s original chemical state before alcohol dependence. This drug should also be combined with therapy.
  - **Disulfiram (Antabuse)** is a drug that causes physical discomfort (such as nausea, vomiting, and headaches) any time the person consumes alcohol.



# Outlook

- Recovering from alcohol use disorder is difficult.
- Your outlook will depend on your ability to stop drinking.
- Many people who seek treatment are able to overcome the addiction. A strong support system is helpful for making a complete recovery.
- Your outlook will also depend on the health complications that have developed as a result of your drinking.

# Outlook

## Health complications connected with alcohol use disorder:

- liver damage
- heart damage
- damage to brain cells
- malnutrition
- bleeding in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract
- cancer in the GI tract
- dementia
- depression
- high blood pressure
- pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas)
- nerve damage
- mental health disorders, including Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome (a brain disease that causes symptoms such as confusion, vision changes, or memory loss), increased risk of suicide

# Prevention

- You can prevent alcohol use disorder by limiting your alcohol intake.
- According to the **National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism**, women shouldn't drink more than one drink per day, and men shouldn't drink more than two drinks per day.
- See your doctor if you begin to engage in behaviors that are signs of alcohol use disorder or if you think that you may have a problem with alcohol. You should also consider attending a local AA meeting or participating in a self-help program such as Women for Sobriety.

# VIDEO

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rs5QHWMLATI>