Alcoholism
Also called: alcohol dependence

A chronic disease characterized by uncontrolled drinking and preoccupation with alcohol.

**Very common**
More than 3 million US cases per year

- Treatment can help, but this condition can't be cured
- Usually self-diagnosable
- Lab tests or imaging not required
- Chronic: can last for years or be lifelong

Alcoholism is the inability to control drinking due to both a physical and emotional dependence on alcohol.

Symptoms include repeated alcohol consumption despite related legal and health issues. Those with alcoholism may begin each day with a drink, feel guilty about their drinking, and have the desire to cut down on the amount of drinking.

Treatment involves counseling by a healthcare professional. A detoxification program in a hospital or medical facility is an option for those who need additional assistance. Medications are available that reduce the desire to drink.

### Ages affected

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### Symptoms

**Usually self-diagnosable**

Symptoms include repeated alcohol consumption despite related legal and health issues. Those with alcoholism may begin each day with a drink, feel guilty about their drinking, and have the desire to cut down on the amount of drinking.
People may experience:
**Whole body:** blackout, dizziness, shakiness, craving, or sweating
**Behavioral:** aggression, agitation, compulsive behavior, self-destructive behavior, or lack of restraint
**Mood:** anxiety, euphoria, general discontent, guilt, or loneliness
**Gastrointestinal:** nausea or vomiting
**Psychological:** delirium or fear
**Also common:** physical substance dependence, problems with coordination, slurred speech, or tremor

**Treatments**

**Treatment consists of therapy and sedatives**
Treatment involves counseling by a healthcare professional. A detoxification program in a hospital or medical facility is an option for those who need additional assistance. Medications are available that reduce the desire to drink.

**Medical procedure**
**Detox:** No longer consuming toxins or clearing toxins from the body through dieting, fasting, or colon cleansing.

**Therapies**
**Counseling:** Professional advice and support that help people solve problems, make decisions, and change their behavior.
**Support group:** A forum for counseling and sharing experiences among people with a similar condition or goal, such as depression or weight loss.
**Cognitive behavioral therapy:** A talk therapy focused on modifying negative thoughts, behaviors, and emotional responses associated with psychological distress.
**Aversion therapy:** Suppressing unwanted behavior, like smoking, by associating it with a negative experience, like an electric shock.
**Family therapy:** Psychological counseling that helps families resolve conflicts and communicate more effectively.
**Behavior therapy:** A therapy focused on modifying harmful behaviors associated with psychological distress.
**Psychotherapy:** Treatment of mental or behavioral disorders through talk therapy.
**Group psychotherapy:** Talk therapy where the therapist works with clients in a group instead of one-on-one.

**Medications**
**Sedative:** Causes drowsiness, calmness, and dulled senses. Some types may become addictive.
- Chlordiazepoxide
**Vitamin:** Helps promote normal body function, growth, and development.
- Thiamine (Vitamin B-1 (mononitrate))
**Alcoholism medication:** Treats chronic alcoholism by decreasing cravings or by causing unpleasant side effects when alcohol is consumed.
- Disulfiram (Antabuse)
- Acamprosate

**Self-care**
Abstinence: Avoidance of an activity.

Specialists

- **Clinical psychologist:** Treats mental disorders primarily with talk therapy.
- **Psychiatrist:** Treats mental disorders primarily with medications.
- **Primary care provider (PCP):** Prevents, diagnoses, and treats diseases.

Consult a doctor for medical advice

Note: The information you see describes what usually happens with a medical condition, but doesn't apply to everyone. This information isn't medical advice, so make sure to contact a healthcare provider if you have a medical problem. If you think you may have a medical emergency, call your doctor or an emergency number immediately.

**Sources:** Mayo Clinic and others. Learn more