

Where to Get Help for a Drinking Problem



Problem drinkers have many options to help conquer their problem.

Psychotherapy. Counseling, one-on-one with a therapist or in group sessions, focuses on feelings and situations related to drinking. The goal is to help an individual cope with emotional problems and other stresses so that he or she no longer relies on alcohol.

Support groups. Organized groups like Alcoholics Anonymous provide assistance, encouragement, and guidance (including a 12-step recovery plan) for members who share an alcohol problem.

Medication. One type blocks the craving for alcohol and the pleasure of getting high. A second type reduces the physical distress and emotional effects people usually get when they quit drinking. A third type causes physical reactions, such as vomiting, when drinking alcohol.

Alcohol treatment centers. Affiliated with hospitals, medical clinics, or community health centers, alcohol treatment centers generally combine more than one approach. People who need help are either treated as an outpatient or admitted as an inpatient, depending on how serious the problem is.

For help, consult the following resources.

Your family physician. A doctor who knows the drinker (and the drinker's family) can determine what type of treatment would be appropriate. Also, anyone with a history of heavy drinking should have a thorough medical exam to uncover any medical conditions that may have been caused or aggravated by alcohol abuse.

Family service agencies. Most communities have agencies that run outpatient alcoholic treatment programs or can refer you to one. Look in your telephone directory or contact your local social services department.

Your religious adviser. Talk with your priest, minister, or rabbi.