

What will happen if I drink on Naltrexone?

Drinking on Naltrexone is dangerous and unpleasant.

People report feeling:

- Very sad, dysphoric, tearful
- As if they are 'hungover'
- No enjoyment from their drinking

Are there other things that I can do to prevent relapse?

Naltrexone is not the only solution. You should continue to receive contact from your Care Co-ordinator who will help you develop strategies to cope with things that may cause you to relapse and high risk situations.

Many people find that they need other support such as provided by Independence Trust (formerly GDAS), NA (Narcotics Anonymous) or a day programme such as the Community Integration Service (CIS).

Important

Naltrexone blocks the effect of all opioids and will prevent some medication working for you. You are given a 'Medical Alert' card which you should carry with you at all times. This can be used to let your doctor or pharmacist know you are on Naltrexone and make sure that they give you medication that will not be affected by Naltrexone.

In cases of emergency the card will give medical staff important information to help them help you.

Support groups and contact details

AA UK 24 hour Helpline	0845 7697555
AA Local Meetings	01452 418515
Drink Line	0800 9178282

Independence Trust (formerly GDAS)

Gloucester	01452 876440
Cheltenham	01242 584881
Stroud	01453 755711
Forest of Dean	01594 825656
CIS	01452 553599

Countywide Specialist Substance Misuse Service

West Gloucestershire Team	01452 891260
East Gloucestershire Team	01242 845614
Criminal Justice Drugs Team	01452 545779
Branchlea Cross	01242 845600

Primary Care Substance Misuse Service

Countywide Team	01452 523151
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CSSMS



Naltrexone in the treatment of alcohol dependence

What is Naltrexone?

Naltrexone is an opiate blocker. It is commonly used as a treatment for heroin and other opiate addiction. More recently it has been found to be helpful in preventing relapse in people who have had alcohol dependence or alcohol related problems.

It is thought that most of the pleasure people with addiction problems get through their substances is from the body's own opiate system.

If the opiate system is blocked by Naltrexone, then excessive drinking should not cause the usual pleasure, and the person taking the Naltrexone will 'learn' that alcohol no longer improves how they are feeling.

This should help prevent a relapse into alcoholism if they continue to take their Naltrexone but have a lapse. Naltrexone also helps people with alcohol problems stop after one or two drinks.

Who should consider taking Naltrexone?

There are no hard and fast rules about who will benefit most from Naltrexone treatment.

- Initial studies have shown that it can be of particular benefit for people who tend to be impulsive (e.g. have other addictive behaviours like gambling, or have problems in controlling anger).
- It may be helpful for people who have had problems with repeated self-harm (e.g. overdosing or self-cutting).

Naltrexone is also worth considering if you have had problems with opiate drug use such as heroin or cocaine

Is there anyone who should not take Naltrexone?

Naltrexone should not be taken by:

- Anyone who is currently on opiates for pain relief
- Anyone on a methadone, subutex or suboxone prescription
- Anyone with a serious liver complaint
- It can be used in pregnancy if the benefits outweigh the risks

Side effects of Naltrexone

- In some people it can cause a short-term liver inflammation. This is a very rare condition and your liver is regularly monitored whilst you are taking Naltrexone. If your liver is affected, it will return to normal once you stop taking Naltrexone
- Some people have reported feeling depressed whilst taking Naltrexone. This is not a common complaint and we will monitor your mental health whilst you are taking Naltrexone
- Other side effects include mild stomach and bowel problems and headaches
- Occasionally people suffer with an allergic skin rash because of Naltrexone

How is Naltrexone taken?

Naltrexone is given to you after alcohol detoxification.

It comes in a 50mg tablet which you are required to take on a daily basis.

Naltrexone can be taken for long periods of time without complications and with good results.

Some people choose to only take Naltrexone occasionally, at times when they are going to a high risk situation, such as going to an important social occasion.

