

Quitting Alcohol Safely: Your Step-by-Step Guide

Mental Health • Substance Use / Withdrawal

Quitting alcohol is one of the best things you can do for your health. If you drink a lot every day, stopping suddenly causes dangerous withdrawal, so quit with medical help.

Do not quit alone

- **If you drink heavily every day, do not stop suddenly on your own.**
- Talk to your provider first. Say how much you drink and if you ever had shakes or seizures when you stopped.
- Have a support person stay with you for the first days.

Know what to expect

- **6 to 24 hours** after your last drink: shaking, sweating, worry, upset stomach, and poor sleep.
- **12 to 48 hours:** the time when seizures (fits) happen.
- **48 to 72 hours:** severe confusion and seeing things that are not there (the DTs). This is an emergency.

Take your medicines

- Take withdrawal medicine exactly as prescribed.
- **Never mix it with alcohol.** Do not drive.
- Take your thiamine (vitamin B1). It protects your brain.
- Ask about medicines that cut cravings.

Eat, drink, and rest

- Eat regular meals. Drink water and other drinks without alcohol.

- Rest in a calm, quiet place.

Get support

- Join a support group, such as Alcoholics Anonymous or SMART Recovery.
- Free, private helpline, any time: 1-800-662-4357.
- Remove alcohol from your home.
- My support person: _____.

Call your provider today if you have

- Shaking, sweating, or worry that gets worse
- Vomiting that keeps you from keeping down fluids or medicines
- Strong cravings, or you started drinking again
- Thoughts of suicide without a plan: **call or text 988 now**

Call 911 or your local emergency number if you have

- A seizure
- Confusion, or seeing, hearing, or feeling things that are not there
- Fever with severe shaking or a racing heart
- Very slow breathing or trouble waking up

This handout supports, not replaces, advice from your own nurse or doctor.

Online: nclexpace.com/patient-education/alcohol-withdrawal-quitting-safely/patient

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