

Disulfiram for Alcohol Dependence

- Disulfiram is a medication used to help manage alcohol dependence. It works best for people who would like to stop drinking alcohol completely, not just drink less.

How do I take this medication?

- Disulfiram is only available from pharmacies that are able to make it into a capsule form.
- The usual dose of disulfiram is 250 mg a day. The maximum dose is 500 mg a day.

What will happen if I drink alcohol while taking disulfiram?

- Disulfiram blocks the body's usual process for breaking down alcohol. This causes a chemical called acetaldehyde to build up in the body. About 10 to 30 minutes after using alcohol, this buildup causes symptoms such as:
 - › Sweating
 - › Headache
 - › Dyspnea (trouble breathing)
 - › Flushing (face or skin becomes red and hot)
 - › Palpitations (fast, irregular heartbeat)
 - › Nausea (upset stomach)
 - › Vomiting (throwing up)

How well does disulfiram work?

- Disulfiram works best for people who have a strong desire to stop using alcohol completely. It may help you to stop using alcohol because of the symptoms it causes. It may not lessen your alcohol cravings. Talk with your health care team for more information on handling cravings.
- Like most medications for alcohol use disorder, disulfiram works best when combined with counselling and/or a support group.

Does disulfiram interact with other medications or foods?

- **Do not use medications or eat foods that contain alcohol while taking disulfiram.** Common items that may contain alcohol include:
 - › Sauces
 - › Vinegars
 - › Cough syrups
 - › Cologne/perfume
 - › Mouthwash
 - ›

How long will I need to take disulfiram?

- You may need to take disulfiram for months or years, or until you are no longer dependent on alcohol.
- **Do not use medications or eat foods that contain alcohol for 14 days (2 weeks) after stopping disulfiram.**

What are the possible side effects?

- Most side effects of disulfiram are minor. They may include:
 - › Drowsiness (sleepiness) or fatigue (tiredness)
 - › Rash
 - › Headache
 - › Metallic or garlic-like aftertaste
- Liver toxicity (poisoning) has been reported in rare cases. Your liver function (how well it works) will be monitored (checked) during treatment.

This pamphlet is just a guide. If you have questions, please talk to your health care provider. We are here to help you.

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.
If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.