

Naltrexone for Alcohol Dependence

Naltrexone is a medication used to help manage alcohol dependence.

It is not clear exactly how this medication works. It is believed to lower the good feeling you get from drinking alcohol. Naltrexone may help you drink less.

Naltrexone does not treat alcohol withdrawal symptoms, like insomnia (not being able to sleep), anxiety, and restlessness. You may need to be treated for withdrawal symptoms at home or in the hospital before starting this medication.

How do I take this medication?

- Naltrexone comes as a 50 mg tablet.
- The usual dose is 1 tablet, once a day in the evening.
- You will likely start taking 25 mg (half a tablet) once a day for a few days. This will help to lower the risk of side effects. You will then take 50 mg (one tablet) when your health care provider says that it is OK.

How well does naltrexone work?

- Naltrexone can help lower your cravings for alcohol and the amount of alcohol you drink. It can help you:
 - › drink less often.
 - › have less drinks when you do drink.
 - › have a longer time before you start drinking again.
 - › have more days of abstinence (not drinking at all).
- Like most medications for alcohol use disorder, naltrexone works best when combined with counselling and/or a support group.

Does naltrexone interact with other medications?

- Naltrexone is an opioid blocker. This means it can block the effects of medications that contain opioids, and increase your risk of an opioid overdose.

Examples of opioids include:

- › Tylenol® with Codeine No. 1
 - › Tylenol® with Codeine No. 2
 - › Tylenol® with Codeine No. 3
 - › Oxycodone
 - › Morphine
 - › Hydromorphone
 - › Methadone
 - › Lomotil®
- **Do not take naltrexone if you take opioids. Taking these medications together can cause you to overdose and suffer serious harm (death).**

What will happen if I drink alcohol while taking naltrexone?

- You do not need to stop taking naltrexone if you drink alcohol.
- **Naltrexone does not:**
 - › lower the effects of alcohol (like impaired coordination and judgment).
 - › affect your blood alcohol level.
 - › change the way your body metabolizes (breaks down) alcohol.

How long will I need to take naltrexone?

- Naltrexone is usually taken for 3 months, but you may keep taking it for up to 1 year.
- You do not need to slowly lower your dose of naltrexone over time. You should not have any withdrawal symptoms when you stop taking it.
- Talk with your health care provider when you feel you are ready to stop taking naltrexone.

What are the possible side effects?

- Most people tolerate naltrexone well. Side effects usually get better over time.
- Common side effects include:
 - › Nausea (upset stomach)
 - › Vomiting (throwing up)
 - › Headache
 - › Dizziness
 - › Fatigue (feeling tired)
 - › Insomnia
 - › Nervousness
 - › Anxiety
 - › Depression
- Liver toxicity (poisoning) has been reported in rare cases. Your liver function (how well it works) will be monitored (checked) while taking naltrexone.

*Prepared by: Pharmacy Services, Aberdeen Hospital
Designed by: Nova Scotia Health Library Services*

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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.