

# Acamprosate for Alcohol Dependence

Acamprosate 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 it less.

It is not clear exactly how this medication works. It is believed to balance brain chemicals which have been disturbed by regular, heavy drinking. It is believed that the discomfort of this imbalance is what makes some people start drinking again. Acamprosate may help you drink less.

Acamprosate may also help lower some symptoms of alcohol withdrawal, like insomnia (not being able to sleep), anxiety, and restlessness.

## How do I take this medication?

- Acamprosate comes as a tablet. The usual dose is 2 tablets, 3 times a day. Since this may be different for you, always follow the directions on the package.
- **Do not chew, crush, or split the tablets.** Each tablet has a coating that stops the medication from being absorbed until the tablet passes through your stomach.
- Your doctor may prescribe acamprosate after you have stopped using alcohol for a few days. They may prescribe a lower dose (1 tablet, 3 times a day) for the first 3 days to lower your chance of stomach upset.
- You may also need a lower dose if your kidneys do not work well or you weigh less than 60 kg (132 pounds).

## How well does acamprosate work?

- Acamprosate lowers alcohol use in people with alcohol use disorder. It can also help you become and stay sober (not use alcohol at all).
- Like most medications for alcohol use disorder, acamprosate works best when combined with counselling and/or a support group.

## Does acamprosate interact with any other medications?

- Acamprosate can be taken with most medications. Be sure to tell your pharmacist if you are taking any other medications.

## What will happen if I drink alcohol while taking acamprosate?

- You do not need to stop taking acamprosate if you drink alcohol.
- **Acamprosate 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 acamprosate?

- You will likely take acamprosate for 3 to 6 months.
- You can talk with your prescriber about stopping acamprosate when you have stopped using alcohol and have little to no cravings.
- You do not need to slowly lower your dose of acamprosate over time. You should not have any withdrawal symptoms when you stop taking it.

## What are the possible side effects?

- Most people tolerate acamprosate well. Side effects are usually mild and get better over time.
- The most common side effects include:
  - › Diarrhea (loose, watery poop)
  - › Anxiety
  - › Insomnia
  - › Itchy skin

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