



The information in this document is provided by professionals with TELUS Health, the free Employee Assistance Program for all DQ employees.

Rehabilitation Treatment for Alcohol and Drug Addiction

Overcoming an alcohol or drug addiction can be difficult. It's a myth that all it takes is willpower. Addiction leads to chemical changes in the brain. Particularly if you have been misusing drugs or alcohol for years, abstinence can initially lead to unpleasant and sometimes medically serious withdrawal effects, such as headaches and tremors. You may also experience anxiety and a powerful craving for the substance. In fact, individuals undergoing addiction recovery sometimes feel as if they will die or go crazy unless they go back to using.

Rehabilitation treatment, or *rehab*, refers to programs that help people in recovery achieve sobriety. Once you have made the decision to face your addiction, it's important to get the help you need as soon as possible. Most programs will provide education and counseling designed to help you develop skills for remaining sober and will encourage or insist on participation in a program such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) as part of the treatment.

What is rehabilitation treatment for alcohol and drug addiction?

Rehabilitation treatment can be done on an inpatient or outpatient basis and is designed to help people go through the difficult process of treating an addiction.

At first, the focus is on helping you achieve total abstinence. You'll receive medical attention as your body begins to adjust to a drug-free life. Once the substance is out of your bloodstream and the major effects of withdrawal are gone, rehab programs typically provide counseling, where you'll learn new coping skills that can help you stay sober.

At the end of rehab, the recovery process is far from over. Counselors at your rehab program will help you set up an aftercare program to assist you in maintaining sobriety. Some people choose to join a 12-step program, such as AA or NA. Addiction counseling and family counseling, or both, are also common. Many people also find stress-management programs useful. Adopting a healthy lifestyle is usually crucial to long-term recovery.

When is inpatient treatment recommended?

Inpatient treatment gives you the 24-hour-a-day support of doctors, nurses, and substance abuse counselors. In some settings, a doctor is always available on site, and in other settings, a doctor is always on call.

Inpatient treatment may be

recommended if you: • have severe

withdrawal symptoms

- are living in a chaotic family environment
- have medical problems that could complicate recovery
- have had numerous relapses
- have multiple (or severe) addictions

Types of inpatient treatment

Here are some of the common types of inpatient options:

Detoxification, or *detox* facilities. These programs help people cope with withdrawal symptoms. These symptoms can be severe if you have been a heavy user of alcohol or some drugs or have been addicted for a long time. Doctors need to carefully monitor the progress of someone going through detox. Sometimes medication is needed temporarily to control withdrawal symptoms. If you have medical problems (such as diabetes or an irregular heartbeat), you may want to select a detox program in a hospital where round-the-clock medical supervision is available.

Chemical-dependency rehab programs. These programs take place either in treatment facilities or hospitals and provide intensive treatment over a 2- to 4-week period. Besides helping people through the withdrawal phase, these rehab programs provide education on substance abuse along with group and family counseling.

Long-term residential programs. Sometimes after finishing a rehab program, people may need more support before they are ready to return to the community. Long-term residential programs are typically administered either by professional counselors or by individuals in recovery. You may see them referred to as *halfway houses*—which typically provide some counseling and require participation in a treatment program as a condition of residence—or *sober living houses*—which usually consist of a group of recovering people living together who provide support for one another but not treatment.

Either of these options—halfway or sober houses—can be particularly beneficial for people with a history of multiple relapses and difficulty remaining sober, people who have poor recovery supports, or people who live in drug-infested areas. However, there are not nearly as many of these programs as there are people who need them, and they often have long waiting lists, stringent criteria for admission, and high fees.

Types of outpatient treatment

As with inpatient programs, a wide range of options exists for outpatient treatment.

Intensive outpatient programs. This is the most common form of outpatient treatment and is typically offered days or evenings. Individuals can continue to work while participating in treatment and typically attend sessions, which consist of educational meetings and counseling. (Some programs may require those in recovery to participate for up to 8 hours a day.) Doctors may also be available to monitor withdrawal symptoms. These programs usually encourage people in recovery to taper their participation gradually. For example, after receiving treatment for the entire day for 2 weeks, a person might start attending the program for 5 evenings a week and then switch to 2 evenings a week before starting an aftercare program.

Counseling. People in recovery can benefit from individual, group, and/or family counseling. Counseling is usually recommended not as a way to become sober, but to stay sober. Addiction counselors can teach social skills and other useful coping strategies as well as help the individual address some of the problems that may have led to the addiction. For example, people who were abused or neglected as children often turn to drugs or alcohol to block painful feelings. However, most experts suggest that the person be off drugs or alcohol for at least six months before addressing these issues.

Counseling often includes cognitive-behavioral therapy, which teaches recovering addicts to recognize the warning signs of a relapse and think through the consequences of using drugs or alcohol. It also teaches people how to avoid the people, places, and situations that may lead to a relapse and to turn to healthy habits and behaviors instead.

Medications. Medications approved for the treatment of alcoholism include disulfiram (also called Antabuse), naltrexone, and acamprosate (also called Campral). Medications that may be prescribed to help during drug rehab include benzodiazepines (such as diazepam or lorazepam), antidepressants (such as fluoxetine and sertraline), and clonidine for opioid withdrawal.

Of note, these medications are designed to provide additional support rather than substitute for rehab or a 12-step program and they must be prescribed by a physician. Additionally, you should be closely monitored during these treatments.

Dual diagnosis treatment. People in recovery and who also have a mental health problem, such as depression or bipolar disorder, usually need to seek treatment for both the addiction and the psychiatric disorder. Many treatment programs have become sensitive to the necessity of treating both issues and providing access to psychiatric evaluation and medication as part of the treatment plan for the addiction.

More on rehab treatment

The cost of rehab treatment varies and will depend on the type of treatment and the level of care needed. Make an appointment with your health care provider. Your physician can help you develop a strategy for coping with alcoholism or substance abuse. If you are having some mild withdrawal symptoms, your physician may be able to monitor your condition and prescribe medication if needed. If additional intervention is needed, check whether it is covered by your health plan, Medicare, or Medicaid if applicable. Find out if the program has a sliding fee scale or a payment plan. Be sure to know the costs and what is and isn't covered before choosing a type of treatment.

For more information, see these helpful websites:

[Addiction Resource Guide](#)

In addition to providing an extensive list of inpatient and outpatient treatment programs, this website has brief fact sheets about each program.

[Oxford House](#)

The website describes this self-supported recovery-house program and can help you find a location near you.

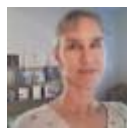
[Sober.com](#)

Sober has a treatment locator to help find both detox centers and supportive living environments, such as long-term residential programs, throughout the country.

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)

SAMHSA is a federal agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It features an online substance use treatment locator as well as a 24-hour helpline.

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