

Primary Care Management of Alcohol Withdrawal – What to Expect

We're so glad you asked for help! You are receiving this information because you would benefit from medications to help you safely stop drinking alcohol. This document covers what to expect, the medications you have been prescribed, your follow-up schedule, the members of your team and symptoms of concern. We are here to help you through each step!

What is alcohol withdrawal?

Alcohol puts the brakes on your brain. Over time, your brain adjusts to alcohol and the brakes don't work as well. When you stop drinking, your brain becomes overactive, and you may experience some uncomfortable symptoms called **alcohol withdrawal**.

Mild symptoms can include:

- Anxiety
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Tremor
- Trouble sleeping

Symptoms usually start between 6 to 24 hours after your last drink and can last up to 1 week or longer.

However, some people may experience *more severe symptoms* including:

- Seizures
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there)
- Extreme confusion
-

If you experience any of these severe symptoms, call 9-11 or go to the hospital.

Medications

You have been prescribed [**Gabapentin / diazepam / Librium**]: a short-term **medication to help with withdrawal symptoms**. Your provider will need to closely monitor your symptoms and adjust doses of this medication throughout the week.

Some people also benefit from **medications that reduce cravings alcohol and reduce the risk of recurrence of drinking**. You have been prescribed [**naltrexone / acamprostate / disulfiram**]

Alcohol can reduce levels of vitamins, which cause negative effects, so you have also been prescribed vitamins including **thiamine, folate and vitamin B12**.

Please take medications as prescribed and ask your primary care provider if you have any questions.

Self-Assessment

It will be helpful for your team to know how you are feeling.

*Please fill out the **self-assessment sheet** every day and bring this with you to follow-up appointments.*

Follow-up

We want to help you succeed by touching base frequently to monitor your symptoms and provide support.

- Your next follow-up visit is **_____** with **_____**

Tips

These are some tips to help keep you and your brain feeling your best.

- Try to limit stimuli (ex. dark and quiet environment)
- Make sure to drink lots of water!
- Try to eat a balanced diet with protein, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables
- Get plenty of sleep
- Keep in touch with your support system about how you're feeling

Your Team

- Your primary care provider
- MAT Nurse
- Behavioral Health
- Recovery Coach (see below)

We are here to support you!
Feel free to contact us (802) 472-3300 with any questions or concerns between your follow-up appointments.

If you are experiencing severe symptoms, please call 9-11 or go to the hospital.

Local Recovery Resources

Recovery is an ongoing process. Many people benefit from connecting with a recovery center.

There are 12 recovery centers in Vermont that offer **free resources** including recovery coaching, group meetings and health and wellness resources. Local centers include:

- **North Central Recovery Center,**
Morrisville
 - o 802-851-8120
 - o ncvrc.com
- **Kingdom Recovery Center,**
St. Johnsbury
 - o 802-751-8520
 - o krctj.org
- Access the **VT HelpLink** for information about resources across the state:
 - o 802-565-LINK
 - o vthelplink.org

You may be able to get transportation to recovery services and medical appointments through the Recovery and Job Access program through Rural Community Transportation:

- Contact 802-748- 8170 for more information.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Time you took your medication for withdrawal: _____

Please fill out the table below with how you have been feeling in the last 24 hours

	None (0)	Mild (1)	Moderate (2)	Severe (3)
Anxious				
Feeling confused				
Restless				
Miserable				
Problems with memory				
Tremor (shakes)				
Nausea				
Heart pounding				
Sleep disturbance				
Sweating				

Total Score:

Adapted from: Bjarne Elholm, Klaus Larsen, Nete Hornnes, Finn Zierau, Ulrik Becker, A Psychometric Validation of the Short Alcohol Withdrawal Scale (SAWS), *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, Volume 45, Issue 4, July-August 2010, Pages 361–365, <https://doi.org/10.1093/alcalc/agq033>

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