

# MEDICATION ASSISTED TREATMENT FOR ALCOHOL ADDICTION

## **What is it?**

Alcoholism is not only a physical illness but also a mental one which affects millions of people all around the world.

It isn't a curable illness, but it can be treated effectively and managed with different programmes of detoxification and rehabilitation.

There are three types of alcohol abuse that people tend to muddle – alcoholism, alcohol abuse and alcohol dependency.

## **Casual drinking...**

When does the moderate drinking become seen as a problem?

When is it seen that drinking alcohol changes from the occasional to common and then viewed as abuse?

Generally, it is advised by government guidelines that fourteen units of alcohol should be consumed by adult men and women each week.

This means that binge drinking, which is having a large amount of drink all at one time, still may be considered as abuse, even though it's not a regular occurrence.

People tend to suffer from alcohol dependency in different ways – sometimes it may appear what seems alright for some, may not be for others.

Identifying themselves as having a problem can be a serious issue and can have devastating effects on relationships, health and life in general.

## **How does alcoholism affect people?**

So, if you drink alcohol, over a period of time, whereby it becomes problematic, it can lead to long-term electrical changes in the brain, which causes the alcoholism due to a compulsive attitude. The brain, due to these chemicals, consistently tells the body that it needs more alcohol...

There are some warning signs of alcohol abuse but sometimes they can take longer to become noticeable.

If you are aware of these signs whilst still in the early stages, it is possible to make a speedy recovery.

Signs can include:

- Craving alcohol all the time
- Being unable to control drinking alcohol
- Feeling the need to keep drinking more alcohol
- Putting alcohol above personal responsibilities
- Spending a substantial amount of money on alcohol
- Behaving differently after drinking

Once you've accepted you have a problem it might be time to find some help.

This is where a Medicated Assisted Program might help.

## **Medicated Assisted Program - Alcohol Addiction.**

Medical Assisted Programs use certain FDA approved drugs combined with counselling and behaviour therapies to help you recover from addiction.

For alcohol addiction there are three main drugs that are used.

### **Disulfiram**

Disulfiram works by producing an acute sensitivity to alcohol, leading to considerable unpleasant symptoms.

If you drink alcohol after taking disulfiram you will likely experience the same symptoms as that of a severe hangover.

The symptoms will manifest themselves quite soon after drinking and will make you feel quite unwell.

You will experience pounding headache, sweatiness, vomiting and confusion.

### **Acamprosate**

Acamprosate is usually sold under the brand name of Campral and is thought to work by stabilizing the chemical signals in the brain that would otherwise disrupt alcohol withdrawal.

It is typically administered 5 days after the last intake of alcohol and is designed to be taken on an ongoing basis.

They can cause side effects of vomiting, stomach cramps, headache and some signs of depression.

### **Naltrexone**

Naltrexone belongs to the class of drugs known as opiate antagonists.

It works in the treatment of alcoholism by working to decrease the cravings experienced for alcohol as blocking the effects of some opiates.

It decreases the desire to drink, however it can take a number of weeks for the effects to work.

The side effects can be anxiety, headaches, drowsiness, and fatigue.

## **Entering A Medical Assisted Program**

On entering a MAP program, like many other programs, the first actions are usually to undertake some form of assessment.

The evaluation in terms of a MAT are to;

Diagnose the substance mis-use disorder.

Evaluate how serious the addiction is.

Assess the presence of any other mental or physical disorders.

Once you have completed the assessment it will then be decided if MAT is a good fit for you.

The sort of criteria that will be looked for is:

You have an official diagnosis of alcohol addiction.

You are willing to adhere and comply with any prescribing instructions of any drugs given to you.

You don't have any physical issues that the medication might exacerbate.

You have been educated in the other options that are available to you.

The things that might go against you being admitted onto a MAT treatment course are:

You exhibit a low motivation to get sober or beat your addiction.

You have a physical condition that drug treatments might make worse.

For medical reason you cannot be treated with FDA approved drugs.

You have a history of medication abuse.

## **A MAT Program Is Not In Isolation**

Don't be fooled into thinking that a MAT program will be the total answer to cracking your addiction problem.

Medication alone is not going to help you overcome addiction and maintain an abstinence from your drug or alcohol problem.

In any treatment for substance abuse it has to be a holistic approach, in other words take in the whole person.

This also means alongside the medication treatment adhering to the other forms of therapy and help given.

Sure, medication will help manage symptoms of withdrawal and cravings but it needs to be in conjunction with;

Evidence based behavioural therapies such as the 12 step facilitation therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy or family behaviour therapy must also be employed alongside.

Education is also a key component.

Having knowledge of your addiction, how you become addicted, the effects and strategies to combat relapses are also important.

The other component that needs to be practiced alongside is a Relapse Prevention Program.

Like any form of treatment it is not always going to be plain sailing, and you will need strategies and actions to stop you relapsing.

Medical Assisted Treatment is increasingly being seen as a vital addition to the treatment of alcohol addiction

and it could be right for you.

To get expert advice and help in you live in the Van Nuys area of California please contact us by clicking this link [CONTACT US](#)