

What Are The Treatment Options For Addiction?

The first step for the addicted person is to acknowledge that there is a substance dependency problem (addiction problem). The next step is to get help. In most of the world there are several support groups and professional services available.

Treatment options for addiction depend on several factors, including what type of substance it is and how it affects the patients. Typically, treatment includes a combination of inpatient and outpatient programs, counseling (psychotherapy), self-help groups, pairing with individual *sponsors*, and medication.

Treatment programs - these typically focus on getting sober and preventing relapses. Individual, group and/or family sessions may form part of the program. Depending on the level of addiction, patient behaviors, and type of substance this may be in outpatient or residential settings.

Psychotherapy - there may be one-to-one (one-on-one) or family sessions with a specialist.

Help with coping with cravings, avoiding the substance, and dealing with possible relapses are key to effective addiction programs. If the patient's family can become involved there is a better probability of positive outcomes.

Self-help groups - these may help the patient meet other people with the same problem, which often boosts motivation. Self-help groups can be a useful source of education and information too. Examples include Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. For those dependent on nicotine, ask your doctor or nurse for information on local self-help groups.

Help with withdrawal symptoms – the main aim is usually to get the addictive substance out of the patient's body as quickly as possible. Sometimes the addict is given gradually reduced dosages (tapering). In some cases a substitute substance is given. Depending on what the person is addicted to, as well as some other factors, the doctor may recommend treatment either as an outpatient or inpatient.

The doctor or addiction expert may recommend either an outpatient or inpatient residential treatment center. Withdrawal treatment options vary and depend mainly on what substance the individual is addicted to:

- **Addiction to depressants** - these may include dependence on barbiturates or benzodiazepines. During withdrawal the patient may experience anxiety, insomnia, sweating and restlessness. In rare cases there may be whole-body tremors, seizures, hallucinations, hypertension (high blood pressure), accelerated heart rate and fever. In severe cases there may be delirium, which according to the Mayo Clinic, USA, could be life-threatening.
- **Addiction to stimulants** - these may include cocaine and other amphetamines. During withdrawal the patient may experience tiredness, depression, anxiety, moodiness, low enthusiasm, sleep disturbances, and low concentration. Treatment focuses on providing support, unless the depression is severe, in which case a medication may be prescribed.
- **Addiction to opioids** – Opioids are a class of drugs that are commonly prescribed for their analgesic, or pain-killing, properties. They include substances such as morphine, codeine, oxycodone, and methadone. Opioids may be more easily recognized by drug names such as Kadian, Avinza, OxyContin, Percodan, Darvon, Demerol, Vicodin, Percocet, and Lomotil. During withdrawal there may be sweating, anxiety and stuffy nose – symptoms tend to be mild. In rare cases there may be serious sleeping problems, tachycardia, hypertension and diarrhea. The doctor may prescribe methadone, or buprenorphine for cravings (alternative substances).