



Information on Antabuse (Disulfiram)

Consent form

Antabuse is a voluntary treatment to prevent alcohol relapse. Due to the powerful interaction with alcohol it is important that, before starting treatment, you sign a form agreeing to use Antabuse medication and that you are aware of the effects.

Why should I take Antabuse?

Antabuse is a deterrent. It can be taken indefinitely. Some people have taken it for 10-15 years without problems and with considerable benefit. Remember that alcohol dependence is a serious life-threatening condition.

Detoxification from alcohol is only the first step on the road to recovery. The relapse rate in alcohol use is 90% in the first year after detoxification. Antabuse can improve your chances of success.

Obviously there are some minor problems and inconveniences with using Antabuse. You should consider these against the problems or consequences of relapsing into alcohol misuse or dependence.

It should also be remembered that Antabuse is not a 'magical cure' for alcohol dependence, it is only an aid. Other measures such as counselling and ongoing support are also necessary.

Many people find that they need other support such as provided by the Independence Trust (formerly GDAS) or Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).

Support groups and contact details

AA UK 24 hour Helpline	0845 7697555
AA Local Meetings	01452 418515
Drink Line	0800 9178282
Al-Anon Family Groups	020 74030888
Families Anonymous	0845 1200660

Independence Trust (formerly GDAS)

Gloucester	01452 876440
Cheltenham	01242 584881
Stroud	01453 755711
Forest of Dean	01594 825656

Countywide Specialist Substance Misuse Service

West Gloucestershire Team	01452 891260
East Gloucestershire Team	01242 845614
Criminal Justice Drugs Team	01452 545779
Branchlea Cross	01242 845600

Primary Care Substance Misuse Service

Countywide Team	01452 523151
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What is Antabuse and how does it work?

Antabuse is a drug that has been used in the treatment of alcoholism for many years. It acts by altering the way your body is affected by alcohol. If you drink whilst taking Antabuse you may experience the following symptoms:

- Violent flushing particularly of the neck and face
- Shortness of breath/tightness of the chest
- Headaches
- Palpitations
- Fast pulse
- Nausea and vomiting
- Dizziness/faintness
- Low blood pressure

If you continue to drink alcohol whilst taking Antabuse you may collapse, this is very serious, particularly if you are drinking alone.

There is no antidote to this reaction and if you drink on top of Antabuse you should contact the Accident and Emergency of the nearest hospital.

How is Antabuse given?

Antabuse is taken as a single 200mg dose at night in the form of a white, scored tablet. It is given after or during alcohol detoxification. It can be safely started 24 hours after your last drink.

Supervision and support whilst taking Antabuse

Research has shown that having someone else support you taking Antabuse increases your chances of successfully staying off alcohol. Support from close friends or loved ones will also help you.

Ideally we would like to meet with you and the person supporting you to help you both understand your medication and to practice supervision and supporting skills such as positive communication. This usually takes one half-hour session with a trained CRA Therapist, but it is worth the time as it could mean that you have a 90% chance of being dry six months after your detox!

Is there anyone who should not take Antabuse?

Anyone who has a severe heart condition, liver failure, pregnant women or anyone with serious health problems should not take Antabuse.

Antabuse remains in your system for up to seven days after you have stopped taking it. Therefore an alcohol reaction can occur up to seven days after stopping Antabuse.

Does Antabuse interact with other substances?

All people taking Antabuse should carry an 'alert card' explaining the dangers. They should be fully aware of substances that react with Antabuse, such as:

- Cough mixtures, elixirs, tonics and expectorants, many of these have an alcohol base. You should check with your doctor or pharmacist to ensure that you are able to take them with Antabuse.

- Cosmetics and toiletries such as perfume and aftershave often have a high alcohol content and may react with Antabuse when applied to the skin. Your pharmacist can give you advice on alcohol-free cosmetics. It is safe to put and aftershave on your clothes instead of onto your skin.
- You should avoid any foods which may contain alcohol, e.g. wine-based sauces, vinegars, pickles and other sauces. Check the ingredients label before eating.
- Avoid breathing in fumes of any DIY product that contains alcohol, acetaldehyde or paraldehyde, e.g. paint-thinners

Antabuse does not interact with simple painkillers such as aspirin or paracetamol. If you are unsure about whether any of your medication will interact with the Antabuse please discuss this with your pharmacist.

Antabuse does not interact with Acamprosate (Campral) or Naltrexone.

What are the side effects of Antabuse?

Even without drinking on top of Antabuse you might experience some side effects.

These side effects are generally mild and usually last one to two weeks. The most common side effects are stomach upset, a metallic taste in your mouth, a rash and drowsiness. It can sometimes make you drowsy or sleepy, this can be a useful side effect if you take it at night.