



## Medication Assisted Recovery

### Alcohol

Medications can be a useful tool in the journey of recovery. Although many people recover from addiction without choosing to take medication, many have benefited. Medications can be useful in recovery from mental and physical health issues in and these will be prescribed by your GP or mental health provider.

If we are going to prescribe anything for you it is important that we know about all of the medications that you are currently taking. Please bring your medication with you to appointments with the doctors here. The medications that you may be offered here are those that are prescribed by addiction specialists. These types of medications tend to work on the brain to readjust changes that have occurred during the addictive phase.

Medications are used to help you in your journey towards recovery, rather than treatment in their own right. There are a number of different medications, which are described in general terms here. We have leaflets about each of these medications so if you would like more detail please pick up one of these from Richmond House or ask your care coordinator for a copy.

### **Medications that are used in alcohol detox**

Medications can be helpful when a person is choosing to stop using a substance that they have become dependent on. We use medications to make the experience more comfortable, safe and to improve chances of success. Here at Pavilions we provide medication-assisted detox in the community to suitable individuals who are physically dependent on alcohol. Benzodiazepine detox prescriptions are usually provided by your GP but Pavilions are able to provide support if you need it. Medications are sometimes used to support the withdrawal from other substances including GBL, stimulants and “legal highs”.

### **Three medications used during an alcohol detox:**

1. **Chlordiazepoxide (Librium)**: this medicine acts on the same receptor in the brain as alcohol. It is used to safely manage the alcohol withdrawal process on a reducing dose. Not everyone who is drinking alcohol every day will need it. If you do the dose and duration will be decided according to your individual situation. A nurse will review your progress during a consultation each day. Remember to tell the nurse if

there is any difficulty with this medicine (for example, you are too shaky or sleepy during detox).

2. **Vitamins**: during heavy alcohol use the body can become low on vitamins that are essential to the healthy working of the body. B vitamins are necessary for the healthy functioning of nerves in the body and in the brain and a number of complications can arise if they become low. Vitamins are usually given by the oral route as it is more convenient but **B vitamins** are absorbed better by **injection** so this might be offered to you if you are particularly at risk.
3. **Acamprosate (Campral)**: this is the 'relapse prevention medication' that tends to be the safest and most convenient to take. There is some evidence that it might also protect the brain a little during detox and when taken regularly as prescribed might reduce cravings. If we do prescribe it here it will be for the first two weeks and then your GP will be asked to continue.

## Medications that are a 'helping hand' in preventing relapse

There are several medications that can help an individual to sustain their recovery. There are no medications that are a cure or quick fix but they can certainly boost recovery in some situations.

Three different medications are recommended for relapse prevention in [alcohol use](#):

1. **Acamprosate**: see above.
2. **Disulfiram**: this is a medication that stops alcohol being broken down. There is a severe and potentially dangerous reaction if this medication and alcohol are combined so it is important to avoid anything containing alcohol (including food, perfumes and medicines that contain alcohol). This medication is not safe to take in some situations (for example liver failure and heart disease) and blood monitoring is needed regularly through treatment.
3. **Naltrexone**: helps a little with relapse prevention by acting on the opioid system in the brain. Like Antabuse it is not safe in some situations and regular blood monitoring is required. Naltrexone can also be used for relapse prevention in opiate dependence.