

# Naltrexone

## Recovery-Focused Treatment for Alcohol Use Disorder

### How can naltrexone help me cut down or stop drinking?

Naltrexone can reduce your urge or desire to drink and can help you continue to choose not to drink (remain abstinent). Naltrexone can also decrease your desire to continue to drink if you start drinking again.

### How does naltrexone work?

- Naltrexone reduces your desire to drink and blocks the enjoyable effects of drinking.
- It can increase your ability to choose not to drink.

### Will I need other forms of treatment?

A successful alcohol treatment program will include a combination of medicine and social support, like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings, counseling, individual or group therapy, and sometimes hospital treatment.

### What do I need to know before starting naltrexone?

- Naltrexone blocks opioid pain medications' ability to work.
- Do not start naltrexone until 7–10 days have passed since your last use of opioid or narcotic pain medicine like oxycodone, hydrocodone, and morphine.
- You should not take naltrexone if you are pregnant, planning on getting pregnant or are breastfeeding.
- Tell your provider if you have kidney or liver disease.
- Taking medicine for an alcohol use disorder is not substituting one drug for another.
- Vivitrol® treatment requires an injection deep into the muscle tissue every month.

### How should I take naltrexone?

- The recommended oral dose of naltrexone for the treatment of alcohol dependence is 50–100 milligrams (mg) daily.
- Vivitrol® is a long-acting form of naltrexone. It is given by injection and lasts about a month.
  - Vivitrol® is given every 4 weeks by a trained healthcare professional.



## What are some side effects of naltrexone?

Common Side Effects	What Can I Do if I Experience This?
Headaches	Non-opioid pain reliever as recommended by your provider
Diarrhea, Nausea or Upset Stomach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drink plenty of water, but also fluids that contain sodium and potassium to prevent dehydration</li><li>• Eat soft bland foods such as bananas, plain rice, toast, crackers or baked chicken without the skin or fat</li><li>• Avoid high-fat, fried or spicy foods</li></ul>

### Less common, but can be severe:

Tell your provider immediately if you have any of the following:

- Nervousness, difficulty sleeping, depressed mood or thoughts of hurting yourself.
- Discuss any symptoms that you think may be due to this medication with your healthcare provider.

All medicines can have side effects. Not everyone has side effects though. They usually get better as your body gets used to the new medicine.

Talk with your provider or pharmacist if any of the above side effects trouble you.



### How long do I have to take naltrexone?

- You and your provider will decide on your treatment plan. Most people take naltrexone for 6 months and often longer.
- Do not stop your medication without talking to your healthcare provider first.

**Contact info:**

**Veterans Crisis Line**  
1-800-273-TALK (8255) or Text - 838255