

# RECOVERY



## Disulfiram

### Using Medications to Help Manage Alcohol Use Disorder with HIV

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**VA**



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health Administration  
PBM Academic Detailing Service

## Drinking and HIV

Many people living with HIV drink more than people without HIV. Drinking can be a problem for several reasons.

Drinking unsafe amounts of alcohol may weaken your immune system, and ability to fight illness or infection.

Drinking at risky levels can:

- Be harmful to your liver, and increase risk for developing cirrhosis or liver cancer
- Make it more likely that you will take risks, such as have unsafe sex
- Make you more likely to abuse other drugs
- Make it harder to take your medications on time every day

### Recommended Drinking Limits

	Single-day Limit	Weekly Limit
Men Age 65 or under	4 or less standard-size drinks	14 or less standard-size drinks
Women or Age over 65	3 or less standard-size drinks	7 or less standard-size drinks

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

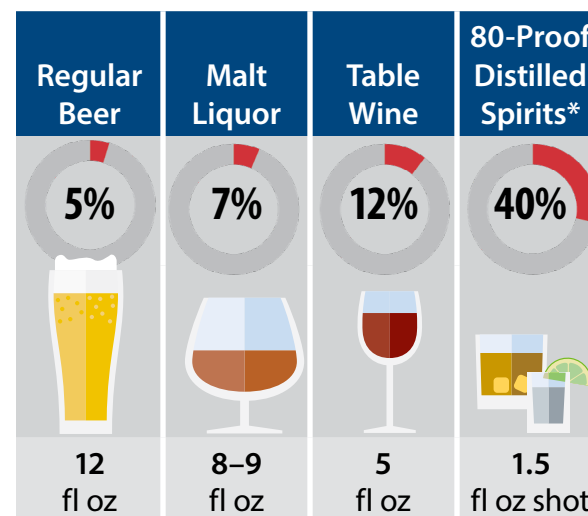
When combined with alcohol, disulfiram causes an extremely unpleasant reaction.

Disulfiram can help you choose not to drink.

A successful alcohol treatment program will include a combination of medicine and social support, like:

- Alcoholics Anonymous
- (AA) meetings
- Counseling
- Individual or group therapy
- Hospital treatment, sometimes

### What percent of "pure alcohol" is in one standard-size drink of...?



\* Gin, rum, tequila, vodka, whiskey, etc.

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



- You must be alcohol free for at least 24 to 48 hours before starting disulfiram.
- Reaction to alcohol can occur up to 14 days after the last dose of disulfiram.
- Taking medicine for alcohol use disorder is not substituting one drug for another.
- You must not consume any alcohol with disulfiram. (Products containing alcohol may include some medications, mouthwash, hand gels, hair gel, gel deodorant etc.).

### How should I take disulfiram?

The most common dose of disulfiram is 250 milligrams (mg) by mouth daily.

Be sure to get the blood draw ordered by your health care provider to check on your liver health.



## What are some side effects of disulfiram?

Common Side Effects	What Can I Do if I Experience This?
Metallic or Garlic Aftertaste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drink plenty of fluids</li><li>• Dissolve sugarless candy in mouth</li><li>• Keep good oral hygiene and brush tongue well</li></ul>
Itchy Skin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drink plenty of fluids</li><li>• Moisturize skin</li></ul>
Nausea	Avoid products that may contain alcohol

Notify your provider if you experience:

- Abnormal thinking
- Numb and tingling nerve pain
- Sudden and reduced vision
- Liver injury (persistent nausea/vomiting, severe stomach pain, dark urine, yellowing of eyes and skin)

*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 disulfiram?

You and your provider will decide on your treatment plan.

Most people take disulfiram for at least 6 months and often longer.

**For more information about drinking and HIV visit the VA's website:**

**<http://www.hiv.va.gov/patient/daily/alcohol-drugs/index.asp>**

**Veteran's Crisis Line  
1-800-273-TALK (8255) or  
Text - 838255**

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### Contact info:

