

RECOVERY



Gabapentin

Using Medications to Help Manage Alcohol Use Disorder with HIV

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

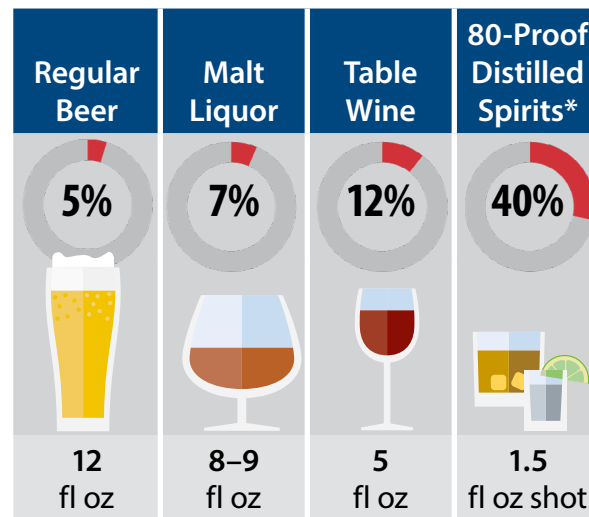
How can gabapentin help me cut down or stop drinking?

Gabapentin can reduce your urge or desire to drink. Gabapentin can also help improve symptoms of anxiety and difficulty sleeping that may occur when stopping alcohol use.

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 gabapentin?



- Gabapentin is commonly used to treat nerve pain and seizures.
- Recent studies have shown it also to be useful to treat alcohol use disorder and alcohol withdrawal symptoms.
- Taking medicine for alcohol use disorder is not substituting one drug for another.

How should I take gabapentin?

The recommended dose of gabapentin is 300 to 600 milligrams (mg) by mouth three times daily with or without food.

If you take an antacid containing aluminum and magnesium (example: Maalox), separate it from gabapentin by at least 2 hours.



What are some side effects of gabapentin?

Common Side Effects	What Can I Do if I Experience This?
Swollen Legs and Arms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Let your provider know if you notice any swelling in your arms or legs• Elevate your legs above the level of your heart whenever possible
Drowsiness or Fatigue	This is a common side effect, and your body will likely adjust over time
Dizziness	Rise slowly to prevent falls

Notify your provider if you experience:

- Skin rash, itching
- Swollen or painful lymph glands in the neck, armpit, or groin
- Unusual bleeding or bruising
- Nervousness, or thoughts of hurting yourself or others

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 gabapentin?

You and your provider will decide on your treatment plan.

Most people take gabapentin 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:

