

# RECOVERY



## Topiramate 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

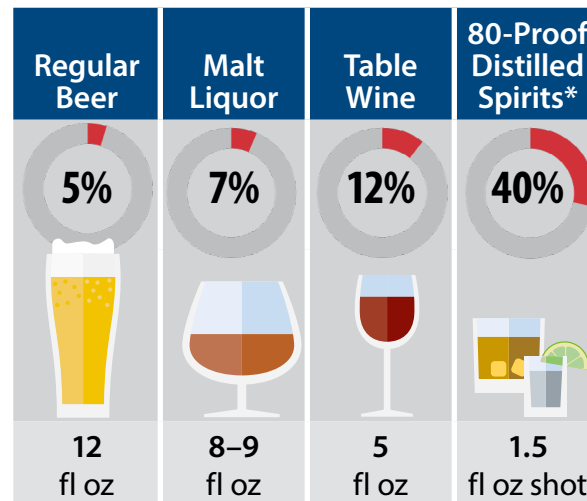
## How can topiramate help me cut down or stop drinking?

Topiramate can help decrease the desire to drink and help you remain sober.

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 topiramate?



### What is topiramate?

Topiramate is used for seizures and migraines, and has also been shown to help treat alcohol use disorder.

Taking medicine for alcohol use disorder is not substituting one drug for another.

### How should I take topiramate?

The recommended dose of topiramate for the treatment of alcohol use disorder is 200 milligrams (mg) by mouth divided into two doses daily.

To minimize side effects you will be started on a low dose that will be increased slowly.

It is important to drink plenty of fluids while taking topiramate.



# What are some side effects of topiramate?

Common Side Effects	What Can I Do if I Experience This?
Tingling, prickling, or numbness	Avoid irritants such as hot water, tight fitting shoes or clothes
Difficulty concentrating, speech difficulties, slowed thoughts or movements	Contact your provider if they are notable or worsening symptoms
Dizziness	Rise slowly to prevent falls
Loss of appetite/weight loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain a healthy balanced diet</li><li>• Monitor weight</li></ul>

Notify your provider if you experience:

- Changes in vision, or in urine such as blood or painful urination.
- Mood changes such as depressed mood or irritability.

*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 topiramate?

You and your provider will decide on your treatment plan.

Most take topiramate 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:

