

DE-TOXIFICATION

De-mystified



Not everyone with an alcohol problem will need detoxification. In fact most people do not. However, this leaflet has been prepared to give people who do, or people who live with people who do, an idea of what the process involves.

De-toxification - who needs it?

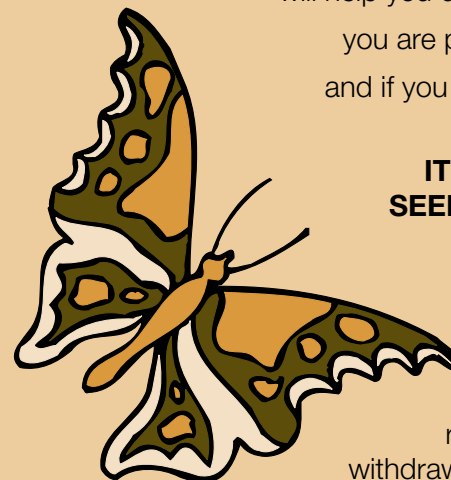
De-toxification may be needed by people who are physically dependent on alcohol. This means that their bodies are so accustomed to receiving frequent and regular doses of alcohol that they suffer withdrawal symptoms when they try to stop drinking. Their bodies have slowly adjusted and developed a tolerance to large amounts of alcohol and cannot suddenly re-adjust to not having any.

Symptoms of withdrawal are:

The shakes : Tingling fingers & toes : Anxiety states : Heavy sweating : Tingling fingers and toes : Ability to consume large amounts of alcohol without apparently getting drunk

Not all physically dependent people will suffer all of these symptoms.

There are also degrees of dependency. Some people seem to drift in and out of slight dependency without really realising it, some people drink very heavily but appear not to develop withdrawal symptoms, others show very obvious symptoms of heavy dependency.



Deciding what to do.

Your Advice Worker/Counsellor will help you decide whether or not you are physically dependent, and if you are, what to do next.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO SEEK EXPERT ADVICE.

Dependent drinkers react differently to the withdrawal of alcohol and the best predictor of how a particular person will react is how they reacted during a previous attempt.

There are various options available to cope with withdrawal:

- A lot of people find they can stop drinking on their own and have only minor reactions, like a period of sleeplessness, stomach upsets, irritability and/or shakiness;



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- Some dependent drinkers reduce their drinking gradually over a period of weeks. This is safe but requires a lot of willpower and a thorough knowledge of self-monitoring techniques. Your Advice Worker/Counsellor can help with this;
- Some people benefit from Community Detoxification. This means that a nurse comes to visit them at home over a period of a week or ten days and administers a reducing regime of drugs to ease the symptoms of withdrawal. This is normally only possible if a friend or relative of the drinker can be in constant attendance during this period;
- Other people may be prescribed medication by their GP to make their withdrawal easier;
- Yet others may need to go into hospital for detoxification. This normally applies if the amount of alcohol being consumed is very high or if there is a history of epilepsy, fitting or heart trouble. Again, drugs are administered in a reducing regime to ease the process of withdrawal;
- Some treatment facilities combine in-patient de-toxification with long-term therapy, counselling and group work. This is because physical de-toxification is relatively simple, but does not remove the underlying desire to continue drinking.

Many dependent drinkers are very frightened of de-toxification because they imagine it will entail experiencing a high level of discomfort or anxiety.

One of the functions of the drugs used in the process of de-toxification is to alleviate anxiety or reduce it to manageable proportions.

Medical supervision ensures that withdrawal from alcohol is a safe and comfortable procedure.

If you are unsure or frightened or have any questions about de-toxification, ask your GP or your Advice Worker/Counsellor. They will be able to help you decide which is the most suitable way forward for you and to refer you to relevant services, should this be necessary.

If you are worried about your own or someone else's drinking, you can talk in confidence to an Advice Worker/Counsellor. The telephone numbers are listed below.

alcoline 0115 948 5570

Lo-call (0845) 7626316

**email: apas@apas.org.uk
website: www.apas.org.uk**

Call for information on your nearest service

apas

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