

# Alcohol Liaison Service: Discharge Advice

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**Hospital Alcohol Liaison Service (HALS)**

**Patient Information Leaflet**

## **Discharge Advice**

Whilst you have been in hospital it has been necessary to prescribe you medication to help manage the risk of alcohol withdrawal syndrome. Whilst medication to support alcohol withdrawal will help you get through the worst of the physical withdrawal symptoms and set you on the right path, once you leave hospital the medication will stop and you will go back to your normal life and learn how to manage without alcohol.

This can be difficult but support is available for you if you need it. The Hospital Alcohol Liaison Service can help support you whilst you are in hospital and can refer you to support services in the community who will be able to advise you on maintaining your sobriety.

Initially you may find you have some symptoms associated with stopping drinking.

### **Some of the symptoms you may experience include:**

#### **Anxiety**

- Many people drink to cope with social and family anxiety.
- When alcohol is no longer used to numb fears, you may feel fearful when there is no danger.
- Anxiety can have physical symptoms like feelings of dizziness, rapid heartbeat or stomach ache. This should not be mistaken for alcohol withdrawal.
- Your GP or community alcohol service can provide counselling to help with anxiety.

#### **Mood Swings**

- Drinking causes chemical changes in the brain which can cause lasting damage.
- After stopping drinking it is normal to experience mood swings as in the past you would control your moods with alcohol.
- A person in recovery can more easily become depressed, feel angry, irritable and sad.

## **Cognitive Disruption (Altered Thinking)**

- After stopping drinking it is common to have racing thoughts which may feel distracting.
- Some people complain of feeling scatter brained or a lack of concentration. Usually this clears up given time but can take six to twelve months.

## **Insomnia**

It is not uncommon to have trouble sleeping, even if you feel tired, for several months after stopping drinking. This is due to the chemical changes caused by alcohol in your brain.

- To help try to create a relaxing atmosphere in the evening, turn off the TV for a couple of hours before planning to go to bed, have a warm bath and a milky drink.
- Try reading a book. The aim is to reduce stimulation to the brain, allowing it to slowly relax.
- Try to keep a regular routine of going to bed and getting up at the same time each day.

## **Memory Loss**

- Memory loss is one of the most typical post acute withdrawal symptoms.
- Short-term memory loss (information learned within the last 30 minutes) is a common complaint.
- It helps to be patient, avoid stressful situations or people, and try to develop a steady routine in the first weeks at home.

**The following advice may help you remain sober once you go home from hospital:**

### **Create an action plan**

- This is extremely important. Do not go into your new life without a plan, make sure you have specific goals and objectives for you to aim for.

- You will soon be working through many things (like relationship issues) and having an action plan can help you on the right track to recovery.

### **Continue your recovery**

- It is important that you do not consider the end of your hospital stay as the end of your addiction. You may still need to address the reasons why you drink.
- The medication we have given you helps you stop drinking but from now on you must develop plans that keep you from starting again.
- We recommend that you work with your local community alcohol services or join a support group like AA that can keep you accountable and offer advice from others in the same situation as you.
- If you have not already spoken to the Hospital Alcohol Liaison service about this then consider asking them to refer you now before you go home.

### **Exercise regularly**

- With many patients recovering from alcohol dependency, feelings of loneliness and depression can continue after completing a managed withdrawal programme. Exercising regularly will help you battle these feelings.
- Getting your heart rate up increases your endorphin production (the hormones that make you feel happy).
- Join a gym, take up swimming, go for a jog, or just take a brisk walk.

### **Eat well**

- Another great way to minimise your feelings of sadness is to make sure you are providing your body with the proper nutrients. You may be prescribed some vitamins to go home with. A healthy diet that includes important vitamins and minerals will help you look and feel better.
- You could book an appointment with your doctor, practice nurse or a nutritionist for help creating your diet plan.

## **Make new friends and try new things**

- It is a sad truth that many of the people you socialised with and places you went before you came into hospital may need to be avoided.
- Your best chance of a complete recovery exists in developing new, healthy routines with positive influences.
- Breaking old routines can be difficult. Why not try learning some new skills or try your hand at a new hobby? Your local library will have information on courses available to you.
- Community alcohol service also have access to training courses, for example, computing and I.T.

## **Finding out more**

- Alcohol Concern: [www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk)
- Alcohol Learning Centre: [www.alcohollearningcentre.org.uk](http://www.alcohollearningcentre.org.uk)
- Drinkaware: [www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)
- Drinkaware for teenagers: [www.truthaboutbooze.com](http://www.truthaboutbooze.com)
- Down your drink: [www.downyourdrink.org.uk](http://www.downyourdrink.org.uk)
- NHS: [www.drinking.nhs.uk](http://www.drinking.nhs.uk)
- Young people: [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

**Further support can be obtained both in hospital and your local community.**

**Hospital Alcohol Liaison Nurse Service (Royal Lancaster Infirmary)**  
01524 512282

**Inspire (North Lancashire Alcohol Community Service)**  
Morecambe: 01524 834210  
Lancaster: 01524 388493

**Red Rose Recovery (North Lancashire Community Service)**  
01772 884745

**Unity (Cumbria Alcohol Community Service)**  
01539 742780

**N.Y Horizons (North Yorkshire Alcohol Community Service)**  
01723 330730

**AA (National)**  
0845 769 7555

## **Leaflet Details**

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## **Other formats**

If you would like to receive this information in an alternative format, then please contact : 01539 795497.

## **Travelling to our hospitals**

For the best way to plan your journey visit our website: <http://www.UHMB.nhs.uk/> or contact Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS): 01539 795497.

## **Useful Contact Details**

NHS 111 (for 24 hour urgent health advice): telephone 111

## **Your Information**

If you would like to know how we use, share, disclose and secure your information and your rights of access to the information we hold about you, visit the Trust's website: <http://www.UHMB.nhs.uk/> or contact Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01539 795497.

## **Evidence**

Details of the evidence used in writing this leaflet are available on request from: Patient Information Officer at 01524 512476.

## **Feedback**

We appreciate and encourage feedback. If you need advice or are concerned about any aspect of care or treatment, please speak to a member of staff or contact PALS on 01539 795497.

UHMBT is a no smoking Trust. Smoking is not permitted on any of the hospital sites. You can contact the NHS North Lancashire Stop Smoking services on the number below:

NHS Quit Squad - **0800 328 6297**

If you live in Cumbria, please call **0300 013 3000** to find a local pharmacy who are offers 1-2-1 support and nicotine replacement therapy.

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