



HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT DRUG & ALCOHOL



*Addiction Treatment
Program*



How to Choose the Right Drug & Alcohol Addiction Treatment Program

A Free Resource for Friends, Family and You

Welcome. We are glad you decided to look through this guide. We are sure you will find this information about addiction, its impact upon brain function, the role of alcohol and drug detox and how to find the appropriate addiction treatment facility helpful.

How to Choose the Right Drug and Alcohol Addiction Treatment Program for You

It is a big step to recognize that drugs and alcohol have taken over your life or the life of your loved one. This recognition generally leads to the crucial question - now what? This question can feel overwhelming; however knowledge can actually give you control over making an informed choice, that is, to get the right kind of help for you or your loved one. Before we begin the discussion about alcohol and drug detox and treatment, it is important to define addiction.

What does it mean to be addicted to a substance or a behavior?

According to the American Medical Association and the American Society of Addiction Medicine, addiction is a disease of the body and mind. To deny the disease aspect of addiction and reduce it to a behavioral problem that can be easily resolved by will power alone, is to advance the notion that epilepsy can be controlled merely by choice, or that advanced diabetes can be controlled simply by choosing a proper diet without the help of medication or a comprehensive approach to lifestyle changes.

"Drug [or alcohol] addiction is a complex illness. It is characterized by intense and at times uncontrollable drug cravings, along with compulsive drug [and alcohol] seeking and use that persist even in the face of devastating consequences." This government pamphlet about addiction treatment continues by stating that, "a wide range of dysfunctional behaviors can result from drug [and alcohol] abuse and interfere with normal functioning in the family, the workplace, and the broader community. Because drug [and alcohol] abuse and addiction have so many dimensions and disrupt so many aspects of an individual's life, treatment is not simple...Because addiction is a disease, people cannot just simply stop using drugs for a few days and be cured." (Source: NIDA, "Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment", May 2009)

Therefore, the treatment approach to be taken with each patient must consider all aspects of the person's history, health, age, drug and alcohol use, emotional and psychiatric state of being, genetic history and much more. Without addressing the whole person, the chances of maintaining recovery are reduced. We will discuss more about this subject in the section on alcohol and drug treatment. But, first, it is important to provide an overview of how addiction develops and why it is a disease of the brain and body.

How Does Alcohol and Drug Addiction Develop?

The body is a finely tuned mechanism. The brain runs the body and synthesizes the operation of several different systems. There is nothing in your life that you do, including breathing, all bodily functions, tasks, or feelings that are not first initiated in the brain. Different sections in everyone's brain are responsible for different functions.

The brain stem (at the base of the brain) regulates the heart rate and breathing. The middle of the brain, called the limbic system, controls feelings of pleasure, other emotions, perceptions, as well as specific activities.

The cerebral cortex toward the front of the brain controls senses, and thinking processes (decision making and solving problems).

All these parts of the brain are able to communicate with the rest of the body (cells, organs, muscles) through neurons. These are chemicals that are naturally produced in the brain called neurotransmitters and they carry messages. There are also receptors that receive the messages in the brain and finally, there are transporters which recycle back to the originating cells, the neurotransmitters, enabling the message to be discontinued when appropriate. For example, you have the desire to flee when danger appears and then the brain determines the danger has passed and the feeling subsides.

All drugs will affect one or more of these cellular communications and the brain's various functions. Drugs, in their proper medical context, are designed to fool the receptors. For example, opiates interfere with the messages of pain, while cocaine inhibits the transporters from reabsorbing the neurotransmitters. Thus, the drug changes the finely tuned mechanism that controls cellular messaging. To state it another way, the drugs interfere with mood, bodily functions such as sleep, feelings and behaviors such as aggression, etc.

For example, we take a drug or a drink once, twice, three times. Perhaps, we enjoy the effects. We decide to continue using the drug or the drink. Initially, the drug or the drink makes us more alert, induces sleep, makes us relaxed, or any of the other side effects due to consumption or use. Sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, the body's natural communication process is disrupted and the neurotransmitters, the receptors, and the transporters are no longer functioning properly. The body's circuitry is messed up. The essence of neuron transmissions has been taken over by the drink or the drug.

It should be noted that many drugs, by their chemical structure and impact upon the brain, are addictive, even when taken as prescribed. Alcohol and drug Addiction happens whether we wish it or not. But to return to the how addiction happens....

Your body and brain are now being controlled by the drug and drink. The body finds its level of tolerance for the substance. That is why with regular use, the addict will need to consume more and more of the substance. This tolerance cannot be avoided. The body will reach a level of tolerance and the drink or drug will no longer work. The addict then must increase the dosage taken or the amount of alcohol consumed. With constantly shifting tolerance levels come withdrawal symptoms. This explains why a certain dosage of pain reliever will stop providing relief after a period of time. Withdrawal symptoms will accompany each level of tolerance. This dynamic is the start of what is referred to as early stages of addiction. It is always best to intervene early in the addiction cycle.

No one believes they will become a drug addict or an alcoholic. But, that is the end result of using substances, especially if they are misused. With tolerance and withdrawal symptoms facing the addict, the body will demand more in the form of cravings or other symptoms such as vomiting, the shakes, or diarrhea to name three of many withdrawal symptoms. It should be noted that there are many factors that combine to increase one's risk of becoming an addict or alcoholic. They include genetics, environment, psychosocial dynamics, health, age, psychiatric condition and much more.

Alcohol and Drug Addiction treatment, like the treatment protocol for diabetes, is designed to help the addict stop using, maintain a substance-free lifestyle, handle cravings, stressors, triggers, and mental health disorders that may lead back to using or what is known as a relapse. And, like the diabetic, the addict may experience a relapse in his or her condition making a return to treatment or a different alcohol and drug rehabilitation treatment program necessary.

What is the Role of Alcohol and Drug Detox?

There is only one purpose for an addict to enter alcohol and drug detox. Detox is the process by which drugs and alcohol are removed from the body. Most of the time, it is recommended that detox occur in a medically based detox facility to ensure that the addict's condition remains stable physically, emotionally, and psychiatrically. Withdrawal, in many instances, may be life threatening if not done under the guidance of trained physicians and nurses.

The reality about alcohol and drug detox is once the drug and alcohol toxins are removed from the body, the addict is still an active addict. Nothing pertaining to use, abuse, behavior etc. has been addressed in detox. The addict, because of the nature of the disease of addiction, will with time, usually rapidly, return to using if he or she has not gone through addiction treatment immediately following detox. Detox is the FIRST STEP in the recovery process. Research indicates that the transition from detox to treatment should be immediate. The longer the time between the completion of drug and alcohol detox and the commencement of addiction treatment, the greater the risk of a return to drinking and using drugs.

What is the Role of Treatment?

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 23.5 million people suffer from substance abuse and addiction. Of that number, only 18% have had treatment. This means the majority of those who are in need of treatment are not receiving it. There are options for addiction treatment, more than many people realize.

The problem starts with admitting that you have a problem. Once you have overcome the denial about addiction, you must still make another significant step-- that is you must ask for help. Scientific research has demonstrated over several decades, that treatment has a profound impact upon changing the addict's life--for the better! However, the complexity of the disease demands that each individual receive a comprehensive physiologic, psychological, and psychiatric evaluation. Treatment helps addicts stop using substances, avoid alcohol and drug relapse, and successfully rebuild their lives.

Like diabetics, alcohol and drug addicts may relapse. It is not considered a crime, or a

weakness of character, just part of the disease. Treatment provides addicts with tools to cope with the signs of relapse, and the knowledge that once a relapse occurs there are actions to be taken to stop the relapse.

Sometimes, people will have what is called a “slip”. The addict will go out and use drugs or drink alcohol but it will be for a brief period of time, such as drinking for an hour, or taking one pill. An alcohol or drug relapse occurs when the addict returns to the drink or drug for an extended period of time. In either case, treatment can help short circuit the use, increase the addict's ability to acknowledge the problem and to seek help. Treatment is effective!

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Best Questions to Ask about a Treatment Program?

All treatment should be individualized. If alcohol and drug addiction treatment program does not provide patients with ongoing evaluations and individualized treatment plans, you should think twice about going there. No two people are completely alike, and while they may have used the same drugs, the factors that determine addiction and recovery are always unique to the individual addict. With that understanding, you can see how a one-size-fits all alcohol and drug treatment program will not work.

All treatment should be individualized. With that understanding, you can see how a one-size-fits all alcohol and drug rehab will not work.

But, how do you know what is the best alcohol and drug treatment program for your needs? The questions listed below will provide you with information that will lead you toward making a good choice.

1. Does the treatment program have the appropriate state, federal, or local licenses?
2. What accreditation, such as The Joint Commission, has the treatment program been awarded? And, when was the last review?
3. Does the substance abuse treatment program treat adults or adolescents?
4. Does the treatment program provide 24 hour onsite nursing staff?
5. Does the alcohol and drug rehab program have certified addiction physicians, nurses and therapists?
6. Does the treatment program utilize a multidisciplinary team approach?
7. Does the drug and alcohol rehab program have an inpatient medically based detox unit?
8. Does the treatment program have specialty programs (women, Christian, LGBT, older adults)?

9. Does the treatment program have a fully developed dual diagnosis program?
10. Does the treatment program have a medication management program?
11. Does the treatment program have the capacity to deal with additional health issues such as HIV, AIDS, tuberculosis etc?
12. Are the physicians full time employees or consultants?
13. What is the ratio between the treating staff to patients?
14. What are the living arrangements?
15. What is the average length of stay at a quality treatment program?
16. Does the alcohol and drug rehab program have a fully developed family therapy program?
17. Does the treatment program provide a variety of therapeutic modalities (therapies)?
18. Does the treatment program use "best practices"?
19. Does the program have relapse prevention groups?
20. Does the treatment program have case managers for each patient?
21. Does alcohol and drug treatment program provide individualized aftercare planning?
22. Does the treatment program have an active alumni program?
23. Does the rehabilitation program accept insurance or private pay?
24. Is the addiction treatment facility private or state owned?

There are many other specific questions that can be added to the list, but if you would like to speak directly to one of Recovery Connection coordinators to learn more about treatment, call 1-866-483-2753 now. Our helpline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. All calls are confidential.

Why Out-of-State Drug and Alcohol Addiction Treatment Program May be My Best Option?

Decades of research are now behind scientifically based approaches to addiction treatment. Research demonstrates that the longer a patient stays in treatment, the better the outcome. One of the myths that people have about receiving treatment is the idea that they can comfortably live at home, maintain their daily routine and obligations, and receive quality treatment. Let's look at that assumption.

When you have spent years, sometimes less, becoming addicted to drugs and alcohol, developing the behavioral patterns of an addict, the associations and the triggers (those environmental cues that can set off a desire to use) your patterns are seriously entrenched within your brain. It takes awareness, knowledge about and skills to break the habits of years of addictive behavior and addictive thinking.

Treatment for addiction requires all of your attention and energy. Early recovery or early stages of addiction treatment are difficult requiring your full attention and effort. But, the rewards are beyond your present ability to imagine. If you choose to stay at home, you run the risk of succumbing to those very influences or triggers that were part of your using experience. They are all distractions from the real work of recovery.

Friends, family, and co-workers may think they are helping but they in fact may be making your situation worse. Having to pass places associated with drinking or drug use can make it very difficult for you to stop. Outpatient programs are a wonderful choice as an aftercare component.

Going out-of-state can provide you with time away from family and work stressors to truly focus on you, your thoughts, your behavior, your health, the consequences of using, and the destruction you have brought into your life. With time away and no distractions, you are left with you. You are stripped of all the things that can fuel your denial (I have a job, I pay my bills, I live in a big house) and your addiction.

Treatment out-of-state can provide you with the time and safety to confront difficult personal issues without worrying about how your family will respond to you as you approach these intensely personal issues. Furthermore, addiction treatment out-of-state can free you from others who have been trying to control your behavior, and who may themselves suffer from codependency or addiction.

While you may wish to receive treatment at home, research does demonstrate that removing yourself from your environment frees you physically to address your problems. Addressing your problems may be more complicated than just ceasing to use drugs or alcohol, especially if you have a history of abuse, a mental health disorder, or a physical condition that has led to the addiction. Studies also demonstrate that the longer a person stays in a substance abuse treatment facility, the better the chances that he or she will maintain abstinent and rebuild his or her life in recovery.

Think about that reality. You are in an alcohol and drug rehab program but living at home. Your partner is sick, your child is in trouble, your relative needs help moving the refrigerator or any other issue that can alter your focus and steal energy needed to recover. These issues do happen and they do interrupt the process of recovery and self-discovery and the work that needs to be done.

Treatment for alcohol and drug addiction is not a joke; it is serious work but it can provide amazing results if you commit to doing the work without distractions.

Fine, you say. "I will go to an inpatient treatment program by my house." The distance between you and your family, friends, and co-workers, makes it easier to focus on your alcohol and drug treatment program. When close by, phone calls about child care or other family matters can seriously distract you from the problem of addiction and cause you to leave treatment early, a choice that might not be an option if you were away from home.

Why You May Have to Choose an Out-of-State Alcohol and Drug Addiction Treatment Program

Not every drug and alcohol rehab program can handle serious health issues or mental health disorders. Without the right diagnosis and the appropriate treatment, recovery is highly unlikely. In the case of a dual diagnosis (substance abuse and a mental health disorder such as depression, anxiety, panic etc.), neither condition will be managed if only one condition is diagnosed and treated. Simultaneous treatment is a must or relapse is likely to occur with both conditions worsening.

Sadly, there are only a few authentic dual diagnosis programs throughout this country. If you suffer, as more and more addicts do, from a debilitating mental health disorder such as panic, for example, it is imperative that you find a quality, medically based dual diagnosed treatment program to regain your health, stabilize your mental health problem and address your addiction. Only then, can you begin to recover and rebuild your life.

What Defines a Quality Treatment Program?

If you read the questions listed in the previous section, you will begin to sense what defines a quality addiction treatment program. First, the facility should have all appropriate state, federal and local licenses. Second, the alcohol and drug rehab program should be reviewed by outside organizations such as The Joint Commission that provide health care providers with stringent guidelines about patient safety, the credentials of the staff, the quality of the treatment protocols, the environment of care (including the quality of the facility grounds etc.), and so on. These organizations provide regular reviews to ensure that the quality is maintained otherwise the facility will lose its accreditation.

Third, medically based substance abuse treatment programs can best address all physical and psychological issues as they arise. That means as a crisis occurs or immediate shifts in treatment are needed, the treatment team can respond at the moment, immediately adjusting the treatment plan. Fourth, all treatment protocols should be structured using best practices.

What are the Levels of Care and Types of Treatment Programs?

There are a variety of levels of care and types of alcohol and drug treatment programs that utilize different philosophies and approaches to treatment. (For further descriptions follow this link.)

Levels of Care

- Inpatient Detox
- Inpatient Treatment
- Residential Treatment

- Partial Hospitalization
- Intensive Outpatient

The Most Common Types of Treatment

- Therapeutic Communities
- Free Standing Addiction Treatment Programs
- Hospital Based Addiction Treatment Programs
- Long Term Residential Treatment Programs
- Specialty Programs

How Do I Pay for Treatment?

There are several ways people can obtain treatment:

- State run programs (free to the patient)
- Local community programs (free to the patient)
- Insurance
- Private pay

There are generally waiting lists to obtain a bed at a state or local community run alcohol and drug rehab program.

For inpatient treatment, there is generally a pre-screening done over the phone prior to admission, which is followed by a medical and clinical assessment done upon entrance to an addiction treatment program. That assessment will determine if the patient meets the criteria for inpatient treatment and which levels of care and types of treatment best suit the patient's needs. However, if an addict has just had a heart attack, a stroke, has MRSA, or any other serious health condition, he or she will need to be sent to a medical hospital (a general hospital) for stabilization first before being sent to a medically based treatment program.

When dealing with insurance, the patient will most likely require the assistance of the program's billing staff to help him or her negotiate with the insurance company, to ensure the longest length of stay possible and the best level of care for the patient obtainable under the specific insurance coverage. Sometimes, a co-pay under the terms of the insurance is required to begin treatment. The billing department will be able to procure all insurance information, and payment options (if there are any) for you so that you can begin treatment without worrying about financing the treatment.

If you have the ability to private-pay, and you believe you need additional care, you can opt to use this method of payment. Some substance abuse treatment programs allow payment plans on private-pay, others do not.

What do I do if My Loved One Refuses to Enter a Treatment Program?

The first thing to understand about addiction is the severity of denial. Denial is powerful, painful, and destructive. No one wants to admit he or she is an addict. It is painful to be part of the cycle of addiction and like it or not, everyone in the inner circle has a role to play in stopping the cycle of addiction. However, there are steps you can take to break through the denial and help your loved one seek treatment. These steps are part of the process known as an intervention.

There are several different types of interventions. For more information on interventions and how to conduct an intervention, please click on our free Intervention Guide.

Does the Treatment Facility Have a Family Program?

The truth about addiction is that it is a family disease. When a loved one has an addiction of any kind, drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling, eating, everyone closely related to the addict is affected. The impact upon the family and the family dynamic can be profound. If there are children, the addiction puts them at risk of developing an addiction as they grow.

A quality addiction treatment program will provide a comprehensive family therapy program through which the family and the addict explore interpersonal relationships, the problems in the family structure and functioning, issues of power, codependency, self-worth, boundaries, consequences, personal responsibility and much, much more. Recovering from addiction, whether for the addict or the family, requires self-reflection and personal growth. The family will come away with a deeper understanding of the disease of addiction, how it has changed their lives as a unit and as individuals, and how they can continue to rebuild their physical and psychological health regardless of whether the addict continues to use or not. The truth is the family can have a powerful impact upon the addict's ability to use without consequences. The family's actions can help break through the addict's denial.

Don't be overwhelmed by the process of finding a quality treatment program

We are specialists in helping you choose the best treatment available. Our helpline is open 24/7, or you can live chat or e-mail or call Recovery Connection now at 1-866-483-2753 and let one of our trained, experienced coordinators answer your treatment questions. All calls are confidential. Call now, don't wait another minute.