

How to Get an Alcoholic Spouse into Treatment

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Addiction to alcohol is called an "equal opportunity destroyer" of [families](#) because it affects people from all walks of life, regardless of income level, nationality, race or gender. It affects over three times as many men as it does women and cost the United States more than \$220 billion in 2005. The good news is that successful treatment of alcoholism results in reductions in traffic fatalities, child abuse, crime, unwanted pregnancies, cancer and strokes.

Alcoholism is a disease of the mind and the body and can be extraordinarily difficult to treat without the proper guidance from [family](#) and professionals. If you have a spouse or a loved one who is addicted to alcohol, there are a number of treatment options - if they want to quit drinking.

Difficulty: Challenging

Instructions

things you'll need:

- Support of the family Appointment with your family physician Telephone numbers of your local hospital and Alcoholic Anonymous office

Treatments for the Alcoholic Spouse

- 1 Speak with your doctor or other [health](#) care professionals about the best options available to your spouse. Often times, you'll have just one opportunity to effectively discuss your spouse's drinking problem with him before he closes down and refuses to explore solutions.
- 2 Ask your family physician about prescribing alcoholism medications such as naltrexone (ReViaT) or disulfiram (Antabuse). ReViaT works by reducing the craving for alcohol. Antabuse produces strong physical side effects to drinking such as vomiting, flushing and dizziness. For many people addicted to alcohol, medications will be effective deterrents until they become open to exploring long-term behavioral treatments.
- 3 If your spouse is willing to stop drinking and is ready to embrace recovery, check him into an in-patient alcohol rehabilitation treatment facility. If he suffers from delirium tremors (the DTs) when he tries to try to stop drinking, an in-patient medical facility may be the only way to help him "detox" and overcome the physical withdrawal symptoms.
- 4 Attend one of the many behavioral treatments with your spouse, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, cognitive behavioral therapy or motivation enhancement therapy. Alcoholics Anonymous is a program that has successfully helped over two million people to recover from alcohol addiction. It focuses on the "12 steps" and support from other recovering alcoholics. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) focuses on a therapeutic relationship between the alcoholic and his therapist. The therapist helps the alcoholic to unlearn his undesirable thoughts, actions and emotions and to replace them with healthier alternatives. Unlike Alcoholics Anonymous, motivation enhancement therapy (MET) teaches the alcoholic to depend on self-efficacy for making positive changes in their life.
- 5 Enroll your spouse in an out-patient alcohol treatment program. Treatment centers help the alcoholic to identify what behaviors and thoughts trigger drinking and how to come up with solutions that do not depend on alcohol.
- 6 Attend marital and family counseling with your spouse. Many of the "excuses" that alcoholics use for drinking are rooted in deep-seated fears and resentment within their relationships. Family counseling can also help the recovering alcoholic to positively deal with his children, jobs and legal problems.

Tips & Warnings

- Support your spouse with love and caring. Go slow and choose the program that works best for your spouse. Get the support of your spouse's family, friends and co-workers before approaching him.
- Don't push your spouse into a program until he is ready to give up drinking. Success won't be possible until your spouse is ready to stop drinking.