

ENCOURAGEMENT  
UNDERSTANDING HOPE  
INSPIRATION RELAXATION  
**ALCOHOL TRUST**  
**CARE DEPENDENCY**  
FREEDOM PLEASURE RELIEF  
CONFIDENCE EXHILARATION  
ACCOMPLISHMENT  
STIMULATING LIGHTENING  
COMFORT CLEAN REVITALISING  
OPTIMISM PLEASURE  
WHOLENESS SOOTHING  
QUALITY CARE PROTECTION  
SUPPORT WELLBEING VIGOR  
HAPPINESS VITALITY REST  
GUIDANCE TRUST HELP  
DEVELOPMENT NOURISHING  
**HOPE HEALTH LOVE**  
REFRESHING STIMULATING  
**HEALING AND RELAXATION**  
**SANCTUARY ENERGY**  
STRENGTH EDUCATION SAFE  
ASSIST MAINTAIN AID  
**CARE**

---

PRIORY

---

Understanding alcohol dependency is the first step to recovery. This leaflet explains its symptoms and effects, and the treatment that is available.

## **What is alcohol dependency?**

If you often drink too much alcohol it can lead to a dependency. You can become physically and mentally dependent on alcohol, and without it, you may suffer withdrawal symptoms.

### **Is alcohol dependency a disease?**

It has a cause, a symptom and is treatable – so it has all the characteristics of a progressive disease. People who are dependent on alcohol lose control of how much and how often they drink. The only effective remedy is to stop drinking completely.

Alcohol dependency is described in medicine as a 'morbid process'. Put simply, it may kill you if it is left untreated.

### **What are the recommended drinking limits in the UK?**

The recommended weekly amount is 14 units of alcohol for women and 21 for men. A unit is half a pint of lager, a pub shot of spirits or a small glass of wine.

### **What are the trends of drinking alcohol among women?**

Recent research shows that the number of women drinking above recommended levels in the UK has risen by 50% between 1988 and 1998. There's also a trend among young women to regularly binge drink – 23% of women aged 16 to 24 often drink twice the recommended daily limit.

### **Why does alcohol affect women more than men?**

For a number of reasons, alcohol affects women sooner, more intensely and over a longer period than men.

Alcohol tends to be diluted by water, and because women tend to weigh less, they've less water to dilute the alcohol. Women also absorb more alcohol than men due to their higher body fat. Women produce fewer of the enzymes that break down and remove alcohol.

These factors contribute to women developing alcohol problems and physical complications far quicker than men.

# SOOTHING RELAXATION REVITALISING ENERGY HOPE HEALING AND SANCTUARY PEACE

## What mental symptoms should I look for?

One of the more subtle signs of alcohol dependency is a change in attitude to drinking. You may want to drink more often and drink more in a session. You may feel guilty about your drinking, or become unsettled if alcohol isn't readily available. And often, it's not the person with alcohol dependency that notices the change, but family or friends.

## What physical symptoms should I look for?

You'll probably be more aware of the physical rather than the mental symptoms. These include:

- blackouts or memory loss after heavy drinking;
- withdrawal symptoms such as shaking, sweating and nervousness; and
- in severe cases, frightening hallucinations.

## What is the CAGE test, and what will it show?

A commonly used test to work out if you could be alcohol dependent is the CAGE test.

### The CAGE questions

- 1 Have you ever felt you should **C**ut down on your drinking?
- 2 Have people **A**nnoyed you by criticising your drinking?
- 3 Have you ever felt bad or **G**uilty about your drinking?
- 4 Have you ever had an **E**ye opener – a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover?

If you answer 'Yes' to two or more questions, you may be experiencing problems with drinking too much alcohol and you should get help.

### **What are the effects of alcohol dependency?**

Alcohol dependency can cause nausea (feeling sick), stomach upsets, diarrhoea and long-term liver damage. It can also badly affect your relationships, leading to problems at home, at work and in your social life. You could also find yourself in trouble with the police for drink-related crimes.

### **How is alcohol dependency treated?**

Treatment varies according to the seriousness of each case and the family and social support available. Generally, treatment involves detoxification, abstinence (not drinking any alcohol) and rehabilitation.

### **How does abstinence work?**

Where abstinence is needed, treatment is structured and often involves several stages similar to those used in self-help organisations such as Alcoholics Anonymous. The main aim is to help you give up alcohol completely, rather than simply cut down your drinking.

### **How does detoxification work?**

If you are physically dependent on alcohol (suffering withdrawal symptoms when you stop drinking), the first step in treatment is medically assisted withdrawal or detoxification. This involves replacing alcohol with other drugs then reducing the dose over five to seven days in hospital. This may be longer if this process is carried out at home or as an outpatient. The aim is to reduce the unpleasant symptoms that result from stopping drinking. These symptoms are generally worse during the first day of treatment, but quickly improve over the following days.

# ON NOURISHING QUALITY ENT HELP CARE GUIDANCE S SOOTHING STIMULATING

## **How does rehabilitation work?**

Rehabilitation can take many forms depending on your needs. It can vary from support through self-help groups to intensive treatment in a rehabilitation facility. Therapy is aimed at helping you to find out why you drink and to develop alternatives to drinking, eventually leading to a fulfilled life without alcohol.

During rehabilitation, you will face up to a variety of difficult issues and may experience intense mood swings.

## **When will I be admitted to hospital?**

Depending on your needs, treatment may be offered as an inpatient or day patient. For example, somebody with emotional problems and no family support may be treated as an inpatient, and a motivated and co-operative person who doesn't need detoxification will be treated as a day patient.

## **What different help is available?**

There are many community services available for treating alcohol problems. In some of these services, the emphasis is on group therapy. Skilled medical and psychiatric staff can also provide one-to-one counselling or other treatment.

Or, you may choose to get help at a private clinic or hospital. These offer reduced waiting times, and there are many units in the UK who treat alcohol dependency. Problem drinkers who go to these units receive specific treatment, not only for the alcohol dependency but also for any associated effects.

## Finding help

If you feel that you or a close relative are having problems which could be caused by alcohol dependency and would like help or more information, you can ask your GP or contact any of the following organisations.

<b>Alcohol Concern</b>	020 7928 7377 ( <a href="http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk">www.alcoholconcern.org.uk</a> )
<b>AA</b>	0845 769 7555 ( <a href="http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk">www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk</a> )
<b>NHS Direct (England and Wales)</b>	0845 4647 ( <a href="http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk">www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk</a> )
<b>NHS 24 (Scotland)</b>	08454 242424 ( <a href="http://www.nhs24.com">www.nhs24.com</a> )
<b>Priory</b>	0845 4 PRIORY 0845 4 774679 ( <a href="http://www.priorygroup.com">www.priorygroup.com</a> ) ( <a href="http://www.addictions.co.uk">www.addictions.co.uk</a> )

Priory hospitals offer a free, confidential, no-obligation assessment to alcohol-dependent people, or their close relatives or friends. This service is also available to GPs, employers and occupational health staff. It may be one of the first opportunities you will have of discussing alcohol dependency with a trained and experienced professional therapist. During the assessment, your drinking history, lifestyle and the different treatment options will be discussed. If we cannot help, we will always put you in touch with someone who can.

If you suspect you've got a problem with drink, call 0845 4 774679 to book a free assessment with a therapist at one of the 15 Priory hospitals around Britain. Lines are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**FREEDOM PLEASURE RE  
RELAXATION SUPPORT CO  
STIMULATING VIGOR EXH**

COMFORT REVITALISING  
INSPIRATION CLEAN  
ENCOURAGEMENT  
FREEDOM PLEASURE RELIEF

## Why should I choose Priory?

### Our service

At Priory, our committed and professional staff provide the highest standards of care, understanding and service for everyone. This service brings hope and confidence, allowing our patients to take control of their lives within a safe and secure environment.

### Expertise and innovation

Through our close links with the public and private sectors, we've developed the expertise and innovation to offer consistent and successful treatment. And, as Europe's leading independent provider of specialist mental health, neuro-rehabilitation and special education services, we bring experience and an excellent reputation.

**We admit patients 24 hours a day, seven days a week.**

This document has been edited by

Dr Austin Tate MB ChB FRCPSych DPM, with the help of Plain English Campaign ([www.plainenglish.co.uk](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk)).

The Crystal Mark applies to wording only.



RELIEF HOPE  
CONFIDENCE  
CLARIFICATION

### The Priory Hospital Altrincham

Rappax Road, Hale, Cheshire, WA15 0NX  
Phone: 0161 904 0050 Fax: 0161 980 4322

### The Priory Hospital Brighton & Hove

14-18 New Church Road, Hove, East Sussex, BN3 4FH  
Phone: 01273 747 464 Fax: 01273 727 321

### The Priory Hospital Bristol

Heath House Lane, Stapleton, Bristol, BS16 1EQ  
Phone: 0117 952 5255 Fax: 0117 952 5552

### The Priory Hospital Chelmsford

Stump Lane, Springfield Green, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 7SJ  
Phone: 01245 345 345 Fax: 01245 346 177

### The Priory Hospital Glasgow

38-40 Mansionhouse Road, Glasgow, G41 3DW  
Phone: 0141 636 6116 Fax: 0141 636 5151

### The Priory Hospital Hayes Grove

Prestons Road, Hayes, Bromley, Kent, BR2 7AS  
Phone: 020 8462 7722 Fax: 020 8462 5028

### The Priory Hospital North London

Grovelands House, The Bourne, Southgate, London, N14 6RA  
Phone: 020 8882 8191 Fax: 020 8447 8138

### The Priory Clinic Nottingham

Ransom Road, Nottingham, NG3 5GS  
Phone: 0115 9693 388 Fax: 0115 9693 381

### The Priory Hospital Preston

Rosemary Lane, Bartle, Preston, Lancashire, PR4 0HB  
Phone: 01772 691 122 Fax: 01772 691 246

### The Priory Hospital Roehampton

Priory Lane, Roehampton, London, SW15 5JJ  
Phone: 020 8876 8261 Fax: 020 8392 2632

### The Priory Hospital Southampton

Hythe Road, Marchwood, Southampton, SO40 4WU  
Phone: 023 8084 0044 Fax: 023 8020 7554

### The Priory Ticehurst House

Ticehurst, Wadhurst, East Sussex, TN5 7HU  
Phone: 01580 200 391 Fax: 01580 201 006

### The Priory Hospital Woking

Chobham Road, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey, GU21 2QF  
Phone: 01483 489 211 Fax: 01483 797 053

### Woodbourne Priory Hospital

21 Woodbourne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B17 8BY  
Phone: 0121 434 4343 Fax: 0121 434 3270

---

# PRIORY

---

Priory Group, Priory House, Randalls Way,  
Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 7TP

Phone: 01372 860 400 Fax: 01372 860 401

Email: [info@priorygroup.com](mailto:info@priorygroup.com) [www.priorygroup.com](http://www.priorygroup.com)