

# Acamprosate

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## How it works:

Acamprosate is thought to restore the balance of chemicals in the brain that were changed due to heavy drinking. It is best for people who want to totally quit alcohol, rather than people who want to reduce their drinking.

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## What to Expect:

- Usually people start a few days after completely quitting alcohol (for example, after detox). You can start while drinking.
  - If you start drinking again, you can keep taking acamprosate as prescribed and follow up with your health care provider.
  - Acamprosate will not reduce the effects of alcohol or “sober you up”, and it doesn’t treat alcohol withdrawal.
  - Combining naltrexone with acamprosate is not helpful for most people.
  - Some people find that acamprosate works better when combined with therapy, like counselling or mutual support groups (examples: AA or SMART Recovery).
  - Some people find that being self-motivated to quit or cut back, instead of doing it for someone else, can be more successful.
  - Some people need to be on acamprosate long-term. Long-term use may not be fully covered under drug coverage plans.
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## Side effects:

- Side effects are usually mild and go away within the first few weeks.
- Most common: stomach problems (diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain).
- Less common: trouble sleeping, anxiety, depression, and dizziness.
- Rare: suicidal thinking or behaviour. Contact your health care provider or emergency services immediately if you are thinking about hurting yourself.

## Why choose acamprosate?

- Helps people stay abstinent.
  - Safe for people with liver disease.
  - Doesn’t make you feel sick if you drink while on this medication.
  - No risk of becoming addicted to acamprosate.
  - No withdrawal symptoms if you stop taking acamprosate.
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## Dosage:

- Acamprosate is taken 3 times per day.
    - Most people take 2 tablets (666mg) three times a day for a total dose of 2000mg, but some people do well on 1 tablet (333mg) three times a day for a total dose of 1000mg.
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## Risks:

- Acamprosate is not recommended if you have severe kidney disease. If you have *mild* or *moderate* kidney disease, you may be able to take a lower dose of acamprosate.
  - It’s unknown how safe acamprosate is for people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, under 19 years old, or over 65 years old. If you’re in those categories, talk to your health care provider about your options.
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## Cost:

Some health care plans only cover it for a limited amount of time. Check your plan to find out the cost and coverage.

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