

The Progression & Recovery From Alcoholism

The steady path of disease progression

- Drinks to feel better
- Drinks to relax
- Drinks to feel stimulated
- Drinks for any reason
- Frequency of drinking increases
- Feels lucky - can drink without getting drunk
- Finds friends who can keep up with drinking
- Has nausea in early day
- Mild shakes that cure themselves
- Daily drinking
- Perspires at night; damp pillow
- Drinks inappropriate amounts
- Drinks at inappropriate times
- Drinks at inappropriate places
- Drinks with those who have more serious drinking problems than self
- Is questioned by others about drinking. Gives convincing arguments.
- Has firm beliefs about what causes alcoholism - willpower, weakness, etc.
- Has definition of alcoholism that does not include self
- Changes definition of alcoholism as symptoms worsen to avoid self diagnosis
- Quits drinking for days or weeks in response to crisis
- Resumes drinking after crisis with large amounts of consumption
- Family or friends try half-measured interventions that fail
- May suffer DT's, seizures, convulsions, when attempts to quit
- Loss of appetite
- Digestive problems, heart racing, undetected medical problems, bruises easily
- Feels remorse, may feel suicidal
- Severe work, family, money or legal problems
- Drinks with improved functioning
- Has mild irritability the morning after
- Insomnia blamed on stress
- Preoccupied with drinking after work
- Gets drunk more frequently
- Feels bored if not drinking in PM
- Thinks about drinking early in day
- Begins taking sedatives for stress
- Blames drinking on problems
- May seek marriage counseling or psychological help
- Finds medical experts that agree no problem exists
- Attempts to diminish and alter times of drinking (ex: after 5PM)
- Begins to experience slight tremors in finger tips but blames on nerves
- Efforts to quit fail, Has blackouts
- Short term memory problems, complains about lack of energy, Shakes increase
- Increasing medical problems, colds, flu
- Notices puffiness and swelling
- Numbness, tingling in legs, night terrors in sleep
- Pain in stomach area
- Thinks about quitting someday, makes promises to quit in future
- Notices blood in urine or stool
- Broken blood vessels, Yellowing of eyes
- Feels fearful about future
- Seeks medical help, but wants to avoid quitting entirely
- Gives up relationships of prior value
- Life becomes unpredictable, legal problems increase, DUI's
- Lies about drinking, Loss of almost all relationships of value
- Loss of control over drinking

The steady path of recovery

- Forced into treatment for medical problems, or coerced to admit self to treatment program by family, court or employer
- Patient is detoxified
- Medical condition is treated
- Patient feels can stay stopped for good without further help
- Patient feels guilty, angry & depressed over personal situation
- Believes that drinking again may be possible
- Looks for other worse off than self as way of denying severity of illness
- Re-education about disease begins
- Self-diagnosis, but minimizes severity of symptoms
- Admits having disease of alcoholism without reservations
- Learns how to treat alcoholism
- Begins taking personal responsibility for changing behavior and thinking
- Makes commitment to treat illness
- Anger, depression & guilt subside
- Begins working in groups to acquire new ways of thinking and emotional common sense
- Attends AA Meetings
- Sobriety becomes the most important possession
- Accepts self as non-drinking alcoholic
- Becomes hopeful about future
- Helps others entering recovery
- Non-drinking becomes unconditional
- Severe psychological stressor may trigger relapse into drinking, but patient bounces back without problems
- Maintains recovery program



This information is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor or healthcare provider. Please consult your health care provider or EAP for advice about a personal concern or medical condition.