



Medications that reduce alcohol cravings

A person's consumption history, medical history and drinking goals can help determine what medication may work to reduce or eliminate cravings. Learn more about the following 4 medications recommended by the BC Centre on Substance Use:

NALTREXONE

- ✓ Effects noticed within 1st hour
- ✓ Is prescribed to help reduce or stop drinking
- ✓ Can be taken at different times of day to be effective -- for example before a social occasion
- ✗ Is not a safe choice if using opioids and some other medications
- ✗ Is not a safe choice if a person has severe liver disease (cirrhosis)

TOPIRAMATE

- ✓ Effects first noticed within a week
- ✓ Is prescribed to help reduce or stop drinking
- ✓ Dose often increases every week
- ✗ Abrupt stopping of this medication can cause severe withdrawal. Work with provider to taper off
- ✗ Is not a safe choice if when pregnant, or when planning to become pregnant

GABAPENTIN

- ✓ Effects first noticed within a week
- ✓ Is prescribed to reduce or stop drinking
- ✗ Abrupt stopping of this medication can cause severe withdrawal. Work with provider to taper off
- ✗ May not be safe for someone with renal (kidney) impairment

ACAMPROSATE

- ✓ Effects first noticed within a week
- ✓ Is prescribed to stop drinking, and works better if not drinking for 3 days before starting
- ✓ If a person relapses (starts drinking again), they should keep taking the medication and consult their provider asap
- ✓ Adolescents/elderly persons may be sensitive, and should update their provider on how they are feeling
- ✗ Pregnant individuals on acamprosate should discuss whether to continue this medication with their provider
- ✗ Is not a safe choice if breastfeeding or for someone with renal (kidney) impairment

Important Notes:

- **Medications are prescribed by a doctor or nurse practitioner.**
- *If alcohol use disorder is diagnosed, the provider can work with an individual to determine whether medications may be a fit.*
- *Like medications for other conditions, it can take a few attempts to find the right medication or combination of medications.*
- *Medication-assisted treatment complements other services, programs and cultural supports.*
- *If prescribed a medication, monitoring of side effects and follow-up care is important.*
- *Not all providers know of these treatment options, so individuals may need to advocate for care.*
- Visit **www.cauds.org** for more information and for links to the BC Centre on Substance Use website.

