

# Substance Use Recovery and Treatment Guide



Choosing substance use treatment can be overwhelming. No single treatment approach is appropriate for all individuals. Finding the right treatment program involves careful consideration of such things as the setting, length of care, philosophical approach, and your or your loved one's needs. This guide provides some information on what to look for when choosing treatment for you and/or your loved one.

## Substance Use Disorder:

Substance use disorders occur when the recurrent use of alcohol and/or drugs causes clinically significant impairment, including health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home.

## What is Recovery?

A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.

## There are many treatment options for Substance Use Disorder

Treatment options include:

- Interim Care
- Outpatient
- Hospital Inpatient
- Residential Treatment
- Transitional Housing
- Co-occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Treatment
- Telemedicine

*Information in this guide adapted from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*

# Treatment Options

## Detoxification (Detox)

Detoxification or Detox is medically supervised withdrawal that uses medication to help people withdraw from alcohol or drugs after using large amounts. Sometimes, withdrawal can be so severe that people hallucinate, have convulsions, or develop other dangerous conditions. Detox can take place on a regular medical ward of a hospital, in a specialized inpatient detoxification unit, or on an outpatient basis with close medical supervision. Detoxification may take several days to a week or more. **It is important to know that detoxification is not treatment; it is a first step that can prepare a person for treatment.**

## Interim Care

Interim care is a treatment option when immediate admission to other care isn't available. Many facilities have long waitlists, but can still help. Interim care provides daily medication and emergency counseling. This can be a helpful bridge from beginning recovery to admission to a regular outpatient, inpatient, or residential setting.

## Outpatient

Outpatient treatment is treatment at a program site while a patient lives on their own. It is best for people willing to attend regular appointments and counseling sessions. Since there is no overnight care, it's important to have a stable living environment, reliable transportation, and supportive family or friends. Care frequency depends on the program, with some requiring daily attendance and others meeting one to three times per week. Outpatient care usually lasts from about two months to one year.

## Hospital Inpatient

Hospital inpatient treatment is 24/7 care connected to a hospital, lasting days or weeks. These are usually connected to a hospital or clinic, and provide detox and rehabilitative care. People with serious mental or medical concerns, as well as substance use disorders, are the most likely to use inpatient treatment. Teens and adolescents benefit from the structure of inpatient treatment to fully understand their needs and make a treatment plan.

# Treatment Options

## Residential Treatment

Residential treatment consists of live-in care, lasting for one month to one year. A stable setting for long-term phased treatment. Each facility has specific rules and expectations for both residents and their families. Residential care usually lasts from a few months to a year. They're best for people without stable living or work situations, and/or who have limited or no family support in treatment. They also help people with very serious disorders who have been unable to get and stay sober or drug free in other treatment.

## Transitional Housing

Transitional housing is a temporary space to stay while transitioning from an intensive treatment setting. Sometimes called a halfway house or sober living facility. As part of the path to independent living, these facilities support people in recovery with temporary places to live. They may also have support programs around employment and education, or case managers to help residents succeed during and after their stay.

## Co-occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Treatment

This treatment option provides integrated care that addresses substance use and mental illness. Having both a substance use and mental health disorder is called a co-occurring disorder. About half of people who experience one will also experience the other.

Addressing both is critical for success in recovery, and integrated treatment programs can help. Integrated care brings together different areas of expertise to treat the whole person, and ensure that treatment for one factor doesn't interfere with treatment of others.

## Telemedicine

A newer option is telemedicine. This includes any care given over the phone or online to support treatment and recovery. Telemedicine can be a tremendous help to people who are unable to regularly get to a treatment facility. While it's not the first step in treatment, telemedicine can be a key part of a treatment plan, especially for patients living far away from a facility.

# Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)



Although no single recovery pathway is right for everyone, people who are addicted to opioids are usually more successful with medication-assisted treatment. This treatment uses FDA-approved medication together with counseling and behavioral therapies. Three FDA-approved medications are used in the U.S. to treat opioid addiction: methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone.

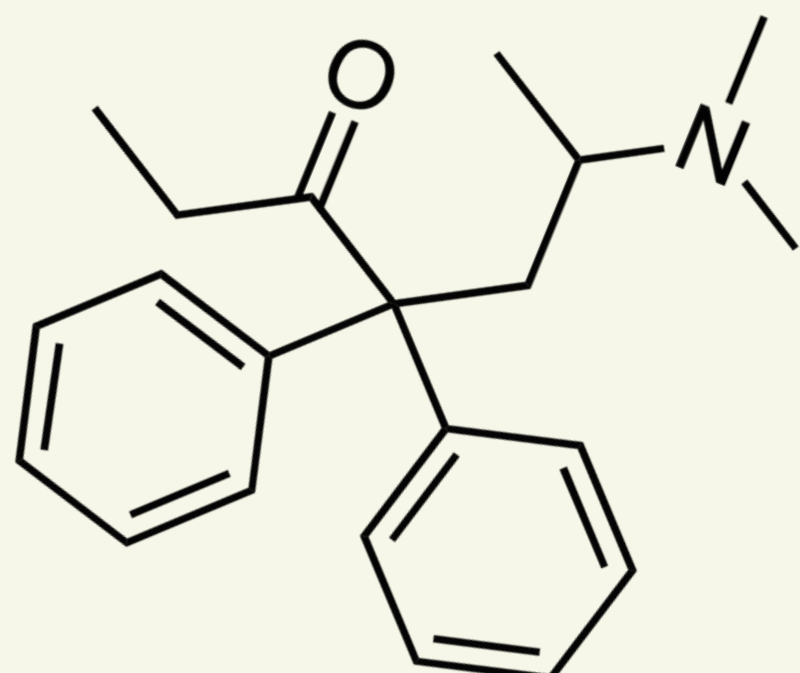
## Methadone

Methadone is a long-acting medication that reduces cravings and withdrawal symptoms. It can block the euphoric effects of short-acting opioids, such as heroin.

Methadone is usually taken daily as a drinkable liquid. It can be dispensed only at licensed, federally-regulated opioid treatment programs, so having reliable daily transportation to a clinic is important while taking methadone.

Because methadone controls withdrawal symptoms and blocks cravings, people who are addicted to opioids tend to stick with it. This allows them to build a life in recovery and avoid the hazards and problems that come with illegal drug use. People who take methadone for a year or more have the best rates of success.

Methadone can work for people who have made other unsuccessful attempts to stop using opioids. It is a recommended treatment for opioid use disorder during pregnancy.



# Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)



## Buprenorphine

Buprenorphine works in a similar way to methadone, controlling withdrawal symptoms and blocking cravings. Buprenorphine is usually taken daily as a small film that must be dissolved under the tongue.

Most guidelines suggest people with shorter, less extensive histories of heavy opioid use may be good candidates for treatment with buprenorphine. It also works for more severe opioid use disorder and for people who decide to switch from methadone.

Buprenorphine can be a good choice for people who can't regularly get to an opioid treatment program. While the beginning of treatment usually involves frequent in-office visits, patients may be able to have a prescription to take at home.

## Naltrexone

Naltrexone blocks the ability of opioids to eliminate pain and induce euphoria. This removes the rewarding aspects of opioid use that result in a desire for more. It is available in either an extended-release injection that is given every 30 days, or in tablet form that is taken once a day by mouth.

Because of the way naltrexone blocks opioid receptors in the brain, it's not a good fit for everyone. Before starting naltrexone, you need to get through an initial 7-10 days of withdrawal. People with chronic pain problems, who sometimes need to take opioid medications, should work carefully with their doctor about a pain management strategy before starting naltrexone.

Naltrexone works well for highly motivated people who are able to stop opioid use for 7-10 days prior to beginning treatment. It is a good option for those who are eager to eliminate all opioids. The injectable form is helpful for people who have a hard time keeping up with daily pills.

Since it is approved for treating alcohol problems as well, people taking naltrexone may find it also helps them avoid drinking.

# Questions to Consider When Selecting a Treatment Program

1. Has the program been licensed or certified by the state? (In Massachusetts, substance use treatment programs are licensed by the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services in the Department of Public Health) Is the program currently in good standing in the state? Are the staff qualified?
2. Does the program accept your insurance? If not, will they work with you on a payment plan or find other means of support for you? (Some programs have beds that are free for those who do not have insurance)
3. What does the program cost? What is included in the cost?
4. How soon can you be admitted into the program? Is there a waiting list?
5. What is the length of the program?
6. For how long do you need to be substance-free prior to admission? (This question does not apply to detox)
7. Does the program encompass the full range of needs of the individual including medical, psychological, social, vocational, and legal?
8. Does the treatment program also address sexual orientation and physical disabilities as well as provide age, gender, and culturally appropriate treatment services?
9. Does the program offer counseling (individual or group) and other behavioral therapies to enhance the individual's ability to function in the family/community?
10. Is there ongoing assessment of an individual's treatment plan to ensure it meets changing needs?
11. Does the program offer medication as part of the treatment regimen, if appropriate?
12. Does the facility have case management/aftercare planning to help make referrals to the next stage in your recovery?
13. Are services or referrals offered to family members to ensure they understand addiction and the recovery process to help them support the recovering individual?
14. Is drug testing mandatory? Is drug testing random or only performed when there is suspicion of drug use?
15. What is the policy in case the individual in recovery relapses?

## For Help Finding the Right Treatment for You:



**MA Substance Abuse Helpline**

(800) 327-5050

<https://helplinema.org/>

**City of Newton Health and Human Services Department**

(617) 796-1420

City of Newton, MA



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Prevent. Promote. Protect.

*Information in this guide adapted from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*

**[www.newtonma.gov/socialservices](http://www.newtonma.gov/socialservices)**