

Antabuse (disulfiram) basics

Treats alcoholism. While Antabuse (disulfiram) is a good way to help stop alcoholism, it works best if you're also seeing a therapist.

What to expect when starting

Here's when people typically experience benefits as well as some possible side effects. Your experience may be different.

	Hours	Days	Weeks	Months	Long term
Antabuse (disulfiram) Drug effectiveness					
Possible side effects†	Hours	Days	Weeks	Months	Long term
Liver damage					
Disulfiram-alcohol reaction					
Drowsiness or fatigue					
Changes in taste					

† Data on frequency of side effects is not available.

Tips from pharmacists

- Don't have any alcohol for at least 12 hours before you start taking Antabuse (disulfiram).
- You might get a mild rash or skin irritation from taking Antabuse (disulfiram). You can treat this by taking an antihistamine like Benadryl (diphenhydramine). Talk to your doctor if you're not sure.
- You might get a reaction with Antabuse (disulfiram) if you have any type of alcohol, even in medicines or in sauces containing alcohol.
- If you miss a dose of Antabuse (disulfiram), take it as soon as you remember, otherwise don't double up if it's time for your next dose.
- Some people notice an aftertaste of either garlic or metal when you start taking Antabuse (disulfiram). This is normal and goes away after a couple of weeks. Talk to your doctor if this bothers you.
- If you try to drink alcohol while taking Antabuse (disulfiram), you might experience vomiting, bad headaches, flushing, nausea, and shortness of breath. This can happen for up to two weeks after you stop taking it.

Risks and warnings

The FDA has identified these as possible serious or life-threatening risks with this medication. Contact your doctor if you experience any of these.

Reaction with alcohol

Drinking alcohol while on Antabuse (disulfiram) can cause nausea, vomiting, bad headaches, flushing and shortness of breath. This usually lasts for 30 to 60 minutes. Also, you can still get this reaction for 2 weeks after you stop taking Antabuse (disulfiram). Never give Antabuse (disulfiram) to someone who's drunk, and especially do not give it to someone without their knowledge because it can be hard to tell if someone's drunk alcohol.

Allergic reaction

Talk to your doctor if you're allergic to latex rubber or pesticides, since Antabuse (disulfiram) can cause a similar reaction.

Liver damage

Antabuse (disulfiram) can damage your liver. Your doctor will do blood tests to check your liver while you're on Antabuse (disulfiram). Talk to your doctor right away if you get a high fever, abdominal pain or notice your skin or eyes turning yellow.