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# Alcohol Use Disorder Treatment: An Overview

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## Introduction

There are many approaches to treating alcohol use disorder (AUD), and the initial approach for any given patient will vary depending on the severity of their use, their experience with treatment, the existence of concurrent illness, etc. This fact sheet gives you a framework for choosing an initial treatment strategy based on how many of the 11 DSM-5 criteria for AUD the patient meets.

## Mild AUD (Two DSM-5 Criteria)

Typical scenario: The patient sometimes drinks more than planned, occasionally missing work or social obligations due to drinking.

- Simple advice/brief therapy to aid in self-tapering (eg: "Try cutting down on your own. Start by going from three beers per day to two or two and a half, and so on until you've stopped.")
- Self-help resources: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism website ([www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov)); self-help books, such as *Alcohol Lied to Me* by Craig Beck and *The 10-Day Alcohol Detox Plan* by Lewis David (refer patients to Amazon.com to browse many other options)

## Moderate AUD (Three to Five DSM-5 Criteria)

Typical scenario: The patient often drinks heavily, has tried to quit in the past, and has had significant psychosocial consequences, but is still able to maintain a relatively functional family or work life.

- Psychotherapy with a certified substance use disorder therapist
- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings
- Possible medication treatment

## Severe AUD (More Than Five DSM-5 Criteria)

Typical scenario: The patient's life revolves around drinking; they have had significant health/legal consequences and have found it difficult to hold a job or maintain relationships.

- Frequent AA meetings
- Intensive outpatient program
- Medication treatment
- Inpatient rehabilitation facility
- Sober house