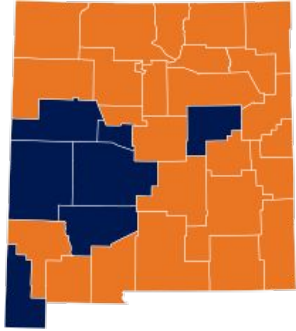


Opioid Remediation Collaborative (ORC) of New Mexico



orcnm.com

Alcoholism

Alcohol use disorder (AUD) is a medical condition characterized by an impaired ability to stop or control alcohol use despite adverse social, occupational, or health consequences. It encompasses the conditions that some people refer to as alcohol abuse, alcohol dependence, alcohol addiction, and the colloquial term, alcoholism. Considered a brain disorder, AUD can be mild, moderate, or severe. Lasting changes in the brain caused by alcohol misuse perpetuate AUD and make individuals vulnerable to relapse. The good news is that no matter how severe the problem may seem, evidence-based treatment with behavioral therapies, mutual-support groups, and/or medications can help people with AUD achieve and maintain recovery. According to the 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 28.1 million adults ages 18 and older (10.9% in this age group) had AUD in the past year.^{1,2} Among youth, an estimated 757,000 adolescents ages 12 to 17 (2.9% of this age group) had AUD during this time frame.^{1,2}

National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, September 2024

<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/understanding-alcohol-use-disorder>

Definition of Addiction

Addiction is a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences. People with addiction use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences.

Prevention efforts and treatment approaches for addiction are generally as successful as those for other chronic diseases.

American Society of Addiction Medicine, September, 2019, <https://www.asam.org/quality-care/definition-of-addiction>

What is “normal” drinking? It depends

Gender	Moderation	Binge drinking	Heavy drinking
Male	≤ 2 drinks/day	≥ 5 drinks/2 hours	≥ 5 drinks/day ≥ 15 drinks/week
Female	≤ 1 drinks/day	≥ 4 drinks/2 hours	≥ 4 drinks/day ≥ 8 drinks/week

What's in a drink?

12 fl oz of
regular beer

=

8–9 fl oz of
malt liquor
(shown in a
12 oz glass)

=

5 fl oz of
table wine

=

1.5 fl oz shot of
80-proof spirits
("hard liquor"—
whiskey, gin, rum,
vodka, tequila, etc.)



about 5%
alcohol



about 7%
alcohol



about 12%
alcohol




about 40%
alcohol

The percent of "pure" alcohol, expressed here as alcohol by volume (alc/vol), varies by beverage.

What's the difference between alcoholism and intoxication?

Intoxication:

		 BLOOD ALCOHOL CONTENT (BAC) Table for Male (M) / Female (F)								
Number of Drinks		Body Weight in Pounds								Driving Condition
		100	120	140	160	180	200	220	240	
0	M	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	Only Safe Driving Limit
	F	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	
1	M	.06	.05	.04	.04	.03	.03	.03	.02	Driving Skills Impaired
	F	.07	.06	.05	.04	.04	.03	.03	.03	
2	M	.12	.10	.09	.07	.07	.06	.05	.05	
	F	.13	.11	.09	.08	.07	.07	.06	.06	
3	M	.18	.15	.13	.11	.10	.09	.08	.07	
	F	.20	.17	.14	.12	.11	.10	.09	.08	
4	M	.24	.20	.17	.15	.13	.12	.11	.10	Legally Intoxicated
	F	.26	.22	.19	.17	.15	.13	.12	.11	
5	M	.30	.25	.21	.19	.17	.15	.14	.12	
	F	.33	.28	.24	.21	.18	.17	.15	.14	

Subtract .01% for each 40 minutes that lapse between drinks.
 1 drink = 1.5 oz. 80 proof liquor, 12 oz. 5% beer, or 5 oz. 12% wine.
Fewer than 5 persons out of 100 will exceed these values.

Source: [California DMV](#)

Alcoholism

What's the difference between alcoholism and intoxication?

Alcoholism:

- Chronic condition
- Periods of sobriety and/or mild use (asymptomatic)
- Independent of choice of liquor (wine vs beer vs hard liquor)
- Meets the criteria for addiction (ASAM definition)

Someone may be drunk but not an alcoholic

Diagnosis of Alcoholism

Medical testing:

- Blood alcohol levels while drinking
- Liver function, CBC tests
- ETG (urine) and Peth (blood)

Reality testing:

Alcoholism and addiction are the only diseases that can be diagnosed by the patient only! Remember, denial is a symptom of the disease!

Treatment of Alcoholism

1. Abstinence

Abrupt abstinence may require management of withdrawal symptoms. Alcohol withdrawal needs to be considered a medical emergency and managed professionally.

2. Therapy (Individual and Group, In- or Out-patient) and ongoing management of co-morbid issues:

a. Homelessness, domestic abuse, unemployment, trauma, legal issues

“What do you get when a horse thief stops drinking? A sober horse thief!”

Treatment of Alcoholism

3. Ongoing community support (lifetime) - *this is not direct treatment*
 - Alcoholics Anonymous
 - Celebrate Recovery
 - Smart Recovery

4. Medical therapeutics (as needed, based on cravings/co-morbid issues)
 - Antabuse
 - Naltrexone
 - Acamprosate
 - SSRI/NSRIs (as prescribed by a psychiatrist)

Final words

- Alcoholism is not curable, but it is treatable and recoverable
- Alcoholism is a chronic condition, recovery a lifelong objective
- Just like cancer, it can have relapses, however we don't condemn a cancer patient whose disease returns - we proceed with further treatment and loving support
- Hate the disease, not the patient!