

WHAT NOW?

ADDICTION TREATMENT GUIDE

You've decided you need help with a substance use problem. So what now?



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Addiction Treatment in Alberta

Deciding to get help for substance use, such as alcohol or drugs, is a difficult – but important – decision. If you've decided that you or someone you care about needs treatment, you're probably wondering what to do now. Finding treatment that works for you will help you succeed on the journey ahead.



This **workbook** will help you understand your options and start a conversation with an addiction counsellor.



Review the questions in this booklet and **check off any topics that you want to talk about** with your addiction counsellor or health care provider. There's extra space at the end of the workbook to make notes.

What are my treatment options?

When it comes to getting help for substance use, everyone has different needs. You have many options to get treatment that's right for you, including:

DETOXIFICATION

Short-term, 24/7 supervision to help you stop using alcohol or drugs in a safe and controlled setting. Due to health and safety concerns, detox (detoxification) is strongly recommended when you stop using alcohol.

Most people will move from detox into another form of treatment or program to keep working on their substance use problems.

COUNSELLING

One-to-one counselling provides assessments, education, and information about addiction and recovery. This will help you set, reach, and maintain your recovery goals. Counselling may be part of residential or day treatment programs. Clients usually live in the community while going to one-to-one counselling or group therapy, but it may also be part of residential or day programs.

RESIDENTIAL AND DAY TREATMENT PROGRAMS

Residential treatment programs offer 24/7 treatment and a place for clients to live while in the program. Day treatment programs let people live in the community and get treatment during the day. Both programs offer services that may include:

- counselling
- recreational activities
- learning new skills (e.g., decision making, coping)
- preventing relapse
- parts of your cultural background
- self-help support
- education

CONCURRENT AND INTEGRATED TREATMENT

Mental health and substance use treatments are offered together so that both concerns can be treated at the same time.

AFTERCARE

Follow-up support or ongoing care (e.g., self-help sponsor, outpatient counselling) to help you meet the stress and challenges of everyday life and recovery.

RECOVERY HOMES AND THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITIES

Clean and sober places for people to live while they adjust to being sober, build life skills, and get ready for independent living and ongoing recovery.

SELF-DIRECTED/PEER SUPPORT

Books, videos, websites, and other resources can help you understand addiction and learn new ways to stop using. Self-help groups like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), or Al-Anon can provide support through regular meetings and sponsors.

TEENAGERS

Teenagers are not the same as adults. They're going through a time of rapid growth, change, learning, and development. Teenagers need treatment that's right for their age and deals with the issues they're facing. If you're under 18, ask an addiction counsellor or health care provider how you can get treatment—with or without involving your parents.



QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT TREATMENT OPTIONS

- What kind of treatment programs will help me?
- Where can I get this treatment?
- How will the treatment centres or programs keep me safe?
What's their safety record?
- What are the qualifications of my counsellor(s) and other health care providers
(e.g., education, years of experience)?
- _____

- _____

- _____

How do I get treatment?

Which treatment option is right for you will depend on your needs and situation, including:

- where you live and if you're willing or able to travel
- what type of substance use you're dealing with
- if you have any mental health concerns
- the cost of the treatment and if you can afford it
- your child care and family needs
- your access to an Employee and Family Assistance Program
- if you want a program made for only men or only women
- your age
- the level of support you need

Everyone's needs are different. An addiction counsellor can help you find information to help decide which facility is best for you.

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

In Alberta, there are treatment programs paid for by the government and private treatment programs that clients have to pay for. Alberta Health Services treatment programs are free to Albertans, except for the cost of room and board.

The cost for private treatment programs depends on the facility. Talk to the facility to find out how much the program costs and if they offer any help to pay for the treatment.

Whatever treatment program you choose, make sure it's safe for your physical, emotional, and mental health needs.

WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO BE ACCEPTED INTO THE PROGRAM OR CENTRE?



To start your recovery, you need to want to stop using substances and be open to getting support from others. You usually need to be substance free for a minimum amount of time before starting treatment. You may need to go to detoxification (detox) to safely get rid of substances from your body and manage your physical withdrawal symptoms. Different facilities or programs have different requirements. You can usually find these requirements on a facility or agency's website or by asking an addiction counsellor.

HOW DO I APPLY TO THE PROGRAM OR CENTRE?



An addiction counsellor can help you decide which treatment is best for you and understand how admission works. When applying to programs, you'll be asked to fill out an application form with information about your substance use history and any past treatment. This information will be used to help decide what treatment is best for you and which facility can provide this care.

HOW LONG WILL THE TREATMENT LAST AND WHEN CAN I START?



Although recovery is a lifelong journey, the length of a program can range from 2 weeks to more than 1 year. How long it is depends on the facility and your treatment needs. Wait times depend on the facility and can change daily.



HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Costs may range from \$40 to \$300 a day, depending on the type of treatment centre. Talk to the agency or treatment centre to find out how much the treatment costs. Also ask if there's any support to help pay for the costs or if they offer a sliding fee scale (it may cost less for people with a lower income).



QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT GETTING TREATMENT

- ❑ What facility might be right for me based on my needs?
- ❑ Would a public or private facility be better for me?
- ❑ How do I apply?
- ❑ How much will treatment cost?
- ❑ How long will it take to get into treatment?

- ❑ _____

- ❑ _____

- ❑ _____

What are treatment centres like?

Treatment programs and centres are made to be comfortable and welcoming. They may provide a range of amenities and services to make your time there as pleasant, safe, and productive as possible.

For information about a specific treatment centre, go to the facility's website, ask for a tour, or speak to someone who'll share their experience about that centre with you. Take the time to make sure that a program will be able to meet your physical and emotional needs.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Treatment centres may have private or shared rooms and bathrooms. There are usually some shared spaces like kitchens, cafeterias, recreation areas, or living rooms. The centre may be only for women, only for men, or for both women and men. If it's for both, women and men will likely have separate living and sleeping spaces, bathrooms, and dining facilities.

FACILITY AMENITIES

The amenities will depend on the facility, but may include things like:

- fitness facilities
- outdoor space and recreation
- electronics to use or rent
- games rooms
- libraries
- televisions and movies

DAILY ACTIVITIES

A typical day at a treatment centre depends on your situation, location, stage of treatment, recovery program, and goals. Generally, a day may consist of:

- personal time
- recovery work (e.g., step work, journaling, education)
- one-to-one or group counselling
- optional group activities (e.g., hikes, movie nights)
- assigned tasks or chores

Treatment gives you the tools to start changing your life and begin your recovery journey. At the treatment centre, you can usually expect to:

- talk to others about your life and challenges
- have group sessions and activities
- do personal work or reflection
- learn skills to cope without using substances
- become more confident and feel better about yourself

Every centre will also have its own rules about things like visitors, outings, curfews, phone calls, and electronics. Ask about these things if they're important to you.

GENDER/CULTURAL/SPIRITUALITY

Recovery isn't only about healing your body. It's also about emotional, social, and spiritual healing. Treatment should be geared towards who you are, such as your:

- gender
- age
- culture
- ethnic background
- sexual orientation

Some treatment centres offer facilities or programs (e.g., an on-site chapel, group therapy only for men or women) that take into account things like gender, culture, and spirituality. Others focus on meeting the needs of specific populations (e.g., Aboriginal holistic treatment centres).

ABORIGINAL TREATMENT CENTRES

Some centres specialize in including traditional Aboriginal culture and teachings as an important part of healing and recovering from addictions. Aboriginal holistic treatment focuses on the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of addiction.

Programs offer different services, but they may include:

- sweat or smudge ceremonies
- nature teachings
- spiritual guidance from Elders
- the medicine wheel concept of balanced and harmonious wellness

Aboriginal values and traditions are often used along with a 12-step treatment philosophy based on not using substances.

SAFETY

Your health and safety are very important and you can stand up for your own treatment and success. You have the right to ask questions about the treatment centre or program, including questions about:

- their safety record
- staff experience and qualifications
- the history of the centre or program
- the success rate of clients

The centre should be able to answer any questions and give you information and evidence about the safety and care they provide.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Privacy is important if you or someone you care about needs addiction treatment. The only people that need to know you're being treated are:

- your treatment providers
- any person you choose to tell (e.g., your employer, family)

Treatment centres and programs have to protect their clients' privacy. Treatment centre staff should be well trained and never share information about a client without the client's consent (unless the client is at risk for harming themselves or others).

Talk to the treatment centre or program about your privacy concerns and ask to see their written privacy policy.

RULES AND RESTRICTIONS

You're probably wondering what to bring with you to treatment and what you'll be allowed to do while you're there.

Every treatment centre has its own rules and restrictions. Below are some of the things that may be restricted.

Smoking: Some centres have a smoke-free policy and some have designated smoking areas. Some smoke-free centres allow nicotine replacement therapy (e.g., patch or gum).

Alcohol or Illegal Drugs: You won't be allowed to have or use alcohol or other substances while in treatment.

Prescription or Over-the-Counter Medicine: Your medicine will need to be approved before you start the program. Some medicine may be locked up for safety and given to you as needed.

Clothing: Clothing with rude language, drug, or alcohol references may not be allowed. There may be other dress codes and a limit to how much luggage you can bring. Usually it's best to wear casual clothes that are comfortable and right for the weather.

Weapons: No weapons of any kind are allowed.

Electronics: Depending on the facility, you may not be able to bring cell phones, tablets, cameras, computers, or video games. If they're allowed, there may be some rules about how you can use them and their use may be monitored.

Money and Valuables: Don't bring large amounts of cash or valuables to treatment. For your safety and peace of mind, leave jewellery and other valuables at home. You may be allowed to bring a little spending money.

VISITORS

Most treatment centres will have rules and regulations about visitors and phone calls. There may be set visiting times (e.g., Sunday afternoons) or certain hours of the day when visitors are allowed. Visitors may only be allowed in certain areas of the facility.

You may not be allowed to have any visitors when you first start your treatment. Once you're allowed to have visitors, they need to be approved before they come to the centre. Visitors who have a substance, or are under the influence, will not be allowed in the centre.

STAFF-TO-CLIENT RATIO

The number of staff for the number of clients (the staff-to-client ratio) may be different in each centre. People often think that having more staff is better because they'll likely get more one-to-one attention and care. But having more staff can make the treatment cost more in private facilities. It can also mean you may spend less time with other clients and have less private time. Talk to your health care provider or counsellor about choosing a treatment centre that will give you the level of care you need.



QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT WHAT TREATMENT CENTRES ARE LIKE

- ❑ What are the rooms like? Are they private or shared?
- ❑ What amenities and services are offered?
- ❑ What are the rules about visitors, phone calls, electronics, curfews, and time away from the treatment centre?
- ❑ Does the centre have similar beliefs and practices as me? If not, will the centre respect my beliefs and practices (e.g., spiritual, lifestyle)?
- ❑ How will the treatment centre provide for my physical and emotional safety? Does the centre offer treatment for mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and bi-polar?
- ❑ How will my personal information be used and protected?
- ❑ Who do I speak to if I have concerns?
- ❑ _____

- ❑ _____

- ❑ _____

What happens during treatment?

Every treatment centre has its own process for admitting new clients. The centre will work to find out your needs and to understand your substance use history and any health problems you may have.

Treatment will give you the tools to start changing your life and begin your recovery journey. The staff at the centre or program will make a treatment plan just for you, based on your situation, needs, and goals.

You might participate in:

GROUP SESSIONS

A group therapy session can have anywhere from 3 to 15 people in it. The group may have the same people in it for every session or have different people each time it meets. Groups can be led by counsellors, psychologists, or other health care providers trained in group therapy. Some centres offer peer support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) that are led by peer support members.

ONE-TO-ONE COUNSELLING

One-to-one counselling can help you understand the nature of drug and alcohol use and why you used. Together, you and your counsellor will explore the physical, mental, and emotional issues of your substance use. You'll work together to set, reach, and maintain your personal recovery goals. You'll learn healthier habits and ways for coping with life's ups and downs.

CONCURRENT AND INTEGRATED TREATMENT

Many people with mental illness have substance use problems, and many people who use drugs and alcohol also have mental health problems. Treating both of these issues at the same time will help a person be more successful in their recovery.

EDUCATION

While attending treatment, you'll have access to many educational resources about recovery and staying sober. Education may include sessions about:

- the stages of change
- how to deal with triggers in your life
- basic drug and alcohol information

The centre may bring in guest speakers to talk about addiction and mental health issues. Videos, reading materials, and electronic resources are often used to help with one-to-one and group sessions.



QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS DURING TREATMENT

- ❑ How will the treatment centre make my treatment plan?
- ❑ Does the treatment centre have group sessions? If so, how do they work?
- ❑ Does the treatment centre have one-to-one counselling? If so, how does it work?
- ❑ Does the treatment centre offer treatment that will deal with my mental health concerns as well as my addiction issues?
- ❑ What educational resources or materials are available at the treatment centre?
- ❑ _____

- ❑ _____

- ❑ _____

What about my friends, family and workplace?

It's important to have the support of family and friends during recovery. Family and friends can help by being understanding and supportive, or just by listening or keeping you company. Family and friends can come visit you if the centre allows visitors.

It's important to remember that family and friends may also be under a lot of stress. They may need to find support to help themselves cope.

Support may be available for your family and friends, including:

- educational material (e.g., books, videos)
- support groups (e.g., Al Anon)
- talking to a counsellor

You may also have to address your substance use and treatment in the workplace. You may want to think about talking to your employer about your substance use and treatment. Some employers offer an Employee and Family Assistance Program that staff can use to get help from a counsellor. Ask your employer if you have access to a program like this.

Human rights laws recognize drug and alcohol dependencies as mental and physical disabilities. You're protected under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*.

What happens after treatment?

AFTERCARE

Finishing treatment is a big accomplishment, but it's just one part of the recovery journey. Aftercare can help you keep the healthy changes you made during treatment. It can also lower your risk of falling into old habits, which could lead you back to using again.

The most important thing about aftercare is having healthy habits and things to do to stay sober. This can include self-help groups, sponsors, or even going to the gym regularly.

RECOVERY HOMES AND THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITIES

Recovery homes and therapeutic communities provide a clean and sober place to live. This gives people time and support to work towards living on their own. There is no set length of stay, but you can expect to stay from three months to one year.

RELAPSE

Relapse means falling back into your old ways of thinking and acting that lead to substance use and abuse. Not everybody returns to substance use, but relapse can happen because recovery is a lifelong process. You have to work to maintain it every single day. Sometimes this is tough.

There are different ways to try not to relapse. For example, you might:

- have a relapse prevention plan
- book an appointment with your counsellor
- call your sponsor



SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT AFTERCARE

□ Will the treatment centre give me strategies and support for relapse prevention?

□ Could a recovery home or therapeutic community help me?

□ If I do slip or have a relapse, what can I do? Who can I contact?

□ _____

□ _____

□ _____

So what now?

Addiction treatment is a very personal choice. The next step is to speak with an addiction counsellor or health care provider about what kind of treatment may be right for you. Review the questions in this booklet and make notes about the topics that you want to talk about.

The best person to stand up for what you need is you. Always ask about a treatment centre or program's:

- safety record
- staff experience and qualifications
- history
- success rate of clients

For more information about addiction treatment and the recovery journey, talk about with your addiction counsellor or health care provider.

Or call one of these numbers:

ADDICTION HELPLINE: 1-866-332-2322

HEALTH LINK: 811

Alberta 
Government