

Mulberry 1

Alcohol detoxification information



Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns about any of CPFT's services, or would like more information please contact: Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on freephone 0800 052 1411 or e-mail pals@cpft.nhs.uk

Out-of-hours' service for CPFT service users

0800 052 22 52

Mondays to Fridays from 5pm to 8pm;
Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays from 8am to 8pm.

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A member of Cambridge University Health Partners

This leaflet gives information about the process of alcohol detoxification in Mulberry 1. It is designed for both patients and carers to prepare them for what they can expect.

Detoxification

Alcohol has a depressant effect on the brain chemistry - when it is suddenly stopped the brain activity can become overactive. This can often result in anxiety, shakiness, sweating, a racing heart and feeling sick. A fit or confusion (DTs) can occur when someone who normally drinks heavily suddenly stops. One or more of these will happen to about 40% of people who are alcohol dependent and usually start between 12-48 hours after a person stops drinking alcohol.

To prevent these unpleasant effects, we offer a medical detoxification using medication to manage these symptoms as a component of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines. Often these are done at home but, for some, this is not appropriate so hospital is used.

The medication greatly helps reduce these symptoms and enables you to become alcohol free. This would usually only be done for those who wish to be completely without alcohol in the longer term.

Mulberry 1

Alcohol detoxification can be a stressful process and we attempt to make the detoxification that you through your last one.

The ward has single-room accommodation and has three beds allocated to detoxification patients.

In addition to providing detoxifications, Mulberry 1 also is an acute psychiatric assessment unit with patients usually staying up to five days. Please be mindful that some of these patients may be struggling with acute mental health difficulties and we ask that all patients are respectful of this.

There are nursing staff on the ward 24 hours a day. There is a specialist medical team during the working week and there is also on-call medical cover out of hours.

Medication

Chlordiazepoxide: A sedative medication that is used to prevent withdrawal symptoms whilst undergoing a detoxification. This will prevent anxiety, shakes and sweats and reduce the chances of having a fit. It is given four times a day. However, nurses may give extra doses if symptoms break through. The dose starts high and reduces over around eight days. This medication is helpful only whilst in the detoxification period and is not continued beyond this period. A small amount of this will be needed following the hospital stay and the ward will supply this.

Vitamin replacement: Often when individuals have been drinking heavily they become low in vitamins. We give both tablet and injection vitamins to replace low vitamin levels when going through detoxification. We would usually give the high-strength vitamins (Pabrinex) as a daily injection for three days. You will need to continue the tablets for three months after discharge

Sleeping tablets: Some have difficulty sleeping whilst detoxifying. Often we will suggest natural methods for getting to sleep but some will need a sleeping tablets. If these are necessary we would not continue these after hospital. Therefore we recommend that you try not to use these towards the end of your stay. We will usually continue without change other medications you are prescribed by your GP.

Medication after detoxification

There are a number of medications that are now recommended to help with post-detoxification abstinence. These will be discussed whilst you are on the ward. The main medications are:

Acamprosate (Campral): A medication that can help reduce cravings for alcohol.

Naltrexone (Nalorex): An anti-opiate medication that is helpful for reducing cravings after detoxification.

Disulfiram (Antabuse): A medication that stops the liver properly processing alcohol so making the user feel unwell if they drink whilst taking the tablets.

Process of detoxification

Admission

Admission to the ward is on a Wednesday morning. Sometimes keyworkers accompany you to the ward. Your community key worker will be able to advise you whether to drink that morning. When you come to the ward you will be breathalysed. This must be under 100 (around three times the driving limit) or you may be asked to leave and come back the next day.

You will be shown the detoxification contract when you arrive at the ward. You will need to sign this to continue the detoxification in Mulberry 1. For safety, staff will usually go through your belongings with you when you are admitted to the ward. We therefore ask you only bring one bag/suitcase of belongings with you. Please bring cash with you if you would like staff to purchase extra items on your behalf from Tesco during your stay. There is a safe in each bedroom for your use if you wish to lock valuables away'

A doctor and a nurse will see you for your initial assessment. They will have details from Inclusion but will cover information relating to alcohol, physical and mental health and also about your life to get a holistic picture. After having a blood test and physical examination the doctor will prescribe the appropriate medication for you. For most people this starts at around midday. On Wednesday afternoon the consultant will see you in the ward round.

Treatment

Whilst on the ward the medication treatment will continue. In addition, there is an allocated primary nurse who will see you on a one-to-one basis throughout your stay. If you are having difficulties, approach one of the staff and they will help resolve your concerns. There is also a ward programme that can help address issues such as anxiety management and also keep you occupied in the daytime.

During the period of detoxification we ask you to

remain on the ward or in the ward garden. If you are having a two-week detox, when the medication is finished you may leave the ward, but we would usually suggest for the first time that you are escorted by staff or family. Visiting hours are 17.30-20.30 on weekdays and 09.00-20.30 at weekends. Due to the strength of the detoxification medication you will taking, we ask that you don't invite visitors to the ward for the first three days of your detox.

Whilst an in-patient we will also offer psychiatric evaluation for those who have mental health issues. If you are concerned about this, discuss this with the ward doctor. During the treatment we keep in close contact with your Inclusion keyworker or nurse to feedback about your progress.

Discharge

Most people leave the ward on the Tuesday afternoon seven days after admission. We will arrange for you have a two-week supply of all your medications if you have completed a one-week detox this will include a small amount of chlordiazepoxide. You will need to get in touch with your GP afterwards to continue other medications .

We will give you a brief discharge summary when you leave and then send a more comprehensive letter to your GP and Inclusion so they know of your progress.

After hospital, follow-up is with the inclusion nurse or keyworker you have seen before hospital. For most people the relapse prevention work is vital for making progress and an important part of proper treatment.

Information for carers

Caring about someone with alcohol dependency can be challenging. Carers play an important role in successful abstinence from alcohol. However it is important that, as a carer, you look after yourself and feel supported and informed along the way.

Inclusion can give support to carers or there are national organisations such as Al-anon, a voluntary sector service.