

Services for adults

Published 20 December 2005.

The use of intoxicants can cause problems in various aspects of life. When people start to worry about the ill-effects of intoxicants or have financial problems or difficulties in relationships or at work, they often search for help outside the home. Discussing things with a trustworthy outsider may help in finding solutions to current problems.

When you have problems with intoxicants, it is a good idea to seek help in the same place you go to when you are ill. You can make an appointment to see a doctor or a public health nurse at your health care centre. You can also see your company nurse or doctor in order to talk about your intoxicant problems and discuss the medical examinations and treatment needed. It is easier to go to a place you are familiar with as you get to talk with a professional who already knows you and the state of your health. Whenever you are in need of urgent care, you can seek help in a hospital urgency room. Talking about your problems and practising your skills in managing them will also often help in overcoming your intoxicant problems. A social services centre will provide assistance and advice on financial problems, child care or residence, among other things. Family counselling centres will advise and help you if you have problems within the family, whether these include intoxicant problems or not

A-Clinics, maintained either by municipalities or the [A-Clinic Ltd](#), are service units for people with intoxicant problems and for their families. A-Clinics employ health care and social work professionals, and provide individual, family and group therapy. Treatment is based on the opportunity to discuss and receive advice on intoxicants and your situation in general. At A-Clinics it is also possible to have a medical examination made. The treatment at A-Clinics is free. An appointment is usually required, but many clinics are on call in the mornings in order to help those in need of urgent help. Detoxification centres provide monitored inpatient treatment that lasts for a few days. The treatment aims at breaking the circle of intoxicant use in a safe environment. After the patient has recovered from the effects of intoxicants, he receives information on the various forms of treatment and can plan the further treatment he will require.

There are rehabilitation centres in different parts of the country that provide more efficient treatment if the outpatient treatments are not enough. The inpatient treatment period outside the normal life setting is of individual duration and should be planned in conjunction with outpatient treatment. A-Clinics, health centres and social services centres help people seeking institutional care.

Many towns have self-help groups for people with intoxicant problems. Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) are fellowships for people with intoxicant problems which operate on an anonymity basis. Al-Anon groups are for the spouses or other relatives of alcoholics. The groups will welcome all problem users or their families. The most important activity is the group meeting, where participants can talk about their problem and support each other in staying sober. A-Guilds are registered associations, founded by A-Clinic clients, that function as a support system for patients receiving treatment at an A-Clinic and provide further treatment for patients who have received institutional care.

Mental problems and the use of intoxicants are often connected to one another. Many people who are addicted to intoxicants also suffer from anxiety. Different forms of psychotherapy are effective in relieving mental symptoms. Practice has proven, however, that psychotherapy should be started only after the use of intoxicants has been put under control. Putting an end to intoxicant use will also help to relieve mental problems.

Pekka Heinälä
MD, Chief Physician
A-Clinic Foundation

link