

Table 4**Drugs used to maintain abstinence from alcohol in adults aged 18 and over**

Acamprosate**Indication**

Maintenance of abstinence; can reduce cravings for alcohol
Only licensed for patients aged 18-65

Initiation

As soon as possible after detoxification. Usually prescribed for up to 6 months, or longer if there is a benefit and patient preference

Major contraindications

Serum creatinine > 120 micromol/L; pregnancy (unless benefits outweigh risks); breastfeeding

Naltrexone**Indication**

Relapse prevention
Supervision improves outcomes

Initiation

After detoxification. Usually prescribed for up to 6 months, or longer if there is a benefit and patient preference

Major contraindications

Patients dependent on opioids; severe or acute hepatic impairment, hepatic failure, acute hepatitis; pregnancy (unless benefits outweigh risks); breastfeeding; severe renal impairment

Disulfiram**Indication**

Disulfiram is an alternative for patients in whom acamprosate and naltrexone are not suitable, or if the patient prefers disulfiram and understands the risks of taking the drug.
Maintenance of abstinence; ensure patient understands risks of drinking while on this medication (induces disulfiram-ethanol reaction); and also knows to avoid certain toiletries and hand sanitisers that contain alcohol.
Supervision improves outcomes

Initiation

At least 24 hours after the last alcoholic drink

Major contraindications

Significant cognitive impairment (which would preclude understanding/recall of risks of concurrent alcohol use); cardiac failure; coronary artery disease; history of stroke; hypertension; psychosis; risk of suicide; severe personality disorder; first trimester of pregnancy; breastfeeding