Advice to patients on withdrawing from **alcohol** at home

1 If you have been dependent on alcohol, stopping drinking makes you tense, edgy, perhaps shaky or sweaty, and unable to sleep. You may be sick or suffer from diarrhoea. The effects on your nervous system can be severe. Medication controls the symptoms while your body adjusts to being without alcohol. This usually takes three to seven days from the time of your last alcoholic drink. If you don't take medication, the symptoms would be worst in the first 48 hours, and then gradually disappear. This is why, if you do take medication, the dose starts off high and then reduces. If you have been prescribed 10mg tablets of chlordiazepoxide, use the table below to remind you when to take the right number of tablets.

2 **You have agreed not to drink alcohol**. You may get thirsty. Drink fruit juices and water but do not overdo it. You do not have to flush alcohol out of your body. More than three litres of fluid could be too much. Don't drink more than three cups of coffee or five cups of tea. These contain caffeine which disturbs your sleep and makes you feel nervous.

3 **Aim to avoid stress**. The important thing to remember is not to give in to the urge to drink alcohol. Help yourself relax by going for a walk, listening to music, or taking a bath.

4 **Sleep.** You may find that your sleep is disturbed, even while you are taking the capsules or as they are reduced. You must not worry about this – lack of sleep does not seriously harm you, starting to drink again does. Your sleep pattern will return to normal in a month or so. It is better not to take sleeping pills so that your natural sleep rhythm returns. Try going to bed later. Have a snack or milky drink, just before you go to bed.

5 **The capsules may make you drowsy so you must not drive or use machinery. If you get drowsy, miss out a dose.**

6 **Meals.** Even when you are not hungry, try to eat small amounts regularly. Your appetite will return.

Number of chlordiazepoxide (10mg) tablets to take and when to take them when withdrawing from alcohol as an outpatient.

	First thing in the morning	12noon	6pm	Bedtime
Day 1	-	3	3	3
Day 2	2	2	2	3
Day 3	2	1	1	2
Day 4	1	1	-	2
Day 5	-	1	-	1

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