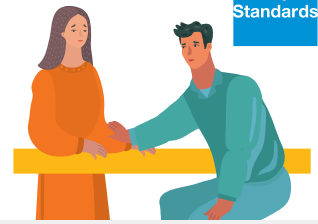


# Problematic Alcohol Use and Alcohol Use Disorder



This document is a resource for health care providers and synthesizes content from the [Problematic Alcohol Use and Alcohol Use Disorder quality standard](#).

## Screening and Assessment for Problematic Alcohol Use and Alcohol Use Disorder

### **Quality Statement (QS)\* 1: Screening**

Screen people for problematic alcohol use or alcohol use disorder on at least an annual basis or at intake for mental health and addictions services. If a person is engaging in problematic alcohol use, collaborate with them on harm reduction approaches, including how they can reduce their alcohol consumption. Use a validated tool to screen, such as:

- [Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test \(AUDIT\)](#)
- [Fast Alcohol Screening Test \(FAST\)](#)
- [Global Appraisal of Individuals Needs Short Screener \(GAIN-SS\)](#)

\*Quality statements are provided in full on page 2.

### **QS 2: Brief Intervention**

Offer a brief intervention—a short session of structured advice—to people who screen positive for problematic alcohol use. Help them make a plan to lower their alcohol consumption or abstain from alcohol. A brief intervention is not appropriate for youth or those who may have moderate to severe alcohol use disorder; these individuals would require a comprehensive assessment. Refer to [Canada's Low Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines](#).

### **QS 3: Comprehensive Assessment**

Perform a comprehensive assessment of people who may have alcohol use disorder to confirm diagnosis. Results will inform the care plan.

## Care Plan and Treatment for People with Alcohol Use Disorder

### **QS 4: Care Plan**

Collaborate on a care plan that provides the most appropriate services for the person. Ensure it is based on their treatment goals and that it considers other physical and mental health conditions, if applicable. Care should be seamlessly integrated, interprofessional, and coordinated.

### **QS 5: Treatment of Alcohol Withdrawal Symptoms**

Offer people with alcohol use disorder treatment for withdrawal symptoms, as appropriate and in accordance with their symptom severity. Benzodiazepines to alleviate acute symptoms of withdrawal are appropriate if required. Consult with an addiction medicine specialist if necessary.

### **QS 6: Information and Education**

Offer information and education on the signs and symptoms of alcohol use disorder, as well as on treatment options, depending on the person's needs and preferences.

### **QS 7: Psychological and Social Interventions**

Offer information on evidence-based psychological and social interventions and help people with alcohol use disorder choose the best option for their needs and preferences. Find programs and resources at [ConnexOntario](#).

### **QS 8: Medications to Reduce Alcohol Cravings and Consumption**

Offer people with alcohol use disorder information on and access to medications that will work best for them, in a time frame that enhances treatment outcomes.

- Naltrexone and acamprosate are the treatments of choice for alcohol use disorder, with fewer side effects compared with other medications
- Disulfiram, topiramate, and gabapentin are other treatment options

### **QS 9: Concurrent Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder and Comorbid Physical Health Disorders**

Offer people diagnosed with alcohol use disorder who have concurrent mental health disorders, substance use disorders, or comorbid physical health disorders psychological and social interventions and medications that will help treat the concurrent and comorbid disorders.

## Monitoring, Support and Follow-Up

### **QS 10: Monitoring, Support and Follow-up**

Schedule follow-up appointments to ensure ongoing monitoring and support. Assess the person's response to

psychological and social interventions and/or medications and collaborate with them to make changes to the care plan as needed.

# Problematic Alcohol Use and Alcohol Use Disorder

## Quality Statements

### Quality Statement 1: Screening

People who present to primary care, the emergency department, mental health and addictions settings, or other appropriate settings are screened for problematic alcohol use and alcohol use disorder using a validated tool.

### Quality Statement 2: Brief Intervention

People who screen positive for problematic alcohol use are offered a brief intervention.

### Quality Statement 3: Comprehensive Assessment

People who may have alcohol use disorder are offered a comprehensive assessment that informs their care plan.

### Quality Statement 4: Care Plan

People with alcohol use disorder have an individualized care plan developed in collaboration with their health care professional that includes appropriate services and treatment goals. Care is seamlessly integrated, interprofessional, and provided in primary care or in collaboration with primary care.

### Quality Statement 5: Treatment of Alcohol Withdrawal Symptoms

People with alcohol use disorder who have withdrawal symptoms are offered assessment, treatment, and support tailored to the severity of their symptoms.

### Quality Statement 6: Information and Education

People with alcohol use disorder and their caregivers are offered information, education, and support appropriate for their needs and preferences.

### Quality Statement 7: Psychological and Social Interventions

People with alcohol use disorder are offered information on psychological and social interventions that address their needs and preferences.

### Quality Statement 8: Medications to Reduce Alcohol Cravings and Consumption

People with alcohol use disorder have timely access to medications that reduce alcohol cravings or consumption based on their needs and preferences.

### Quality Statement 9: Concurrent Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders and Comorbid Physical Health Disorders

People with alcohol use disorder who also have a mental health disorder, physical health disorder, or another substance use disorder are offered treatment for their concurrent and comorbid disorders.

### Quality Statement 10: Monitoring, Support and Follow-up

People with alcohol use disorder are offered ongoing follow-up with their health care professional on a regular basis to monitor treatment and response.

Note: This resource can be used to support health care providers in the provision of care. It does not override the responsibility of health care providers to make decisions with patients, after considering each patient's unique circumstances. Grouping/directionality of statements may not be applicable for every patient, and clinical judgment should be used.

## Resources

- [Problematic Alcohol Use and Alcohol Use Disorder Quality Standard](https://www.hqontario.ca/Portals/0/documents/evidence/quality-standards/qs-alcohol-use-disorder-quality-standard-en.pdf)  
https://www.hqontario.ca/Portals/0/documents/evidence/quality-standards/qs-alcohol-use-disorder-quality-standard-en.pdf
- [Problematic Alcohol Use and Alcohol Use Disorder Patient Guide](https://www.hqontario.ca/Portals/0/documents/evidence/quality-standards/qs-alcohol-use-disorder-patient-guide-en.pdf)  
https://www.hqontario.ca/Portals/0/documents/evidence/quality-standards/qs-alcohol-use-disorder-patient-guide-en.pdf
- [ConnexOntario](https://www.connexontario.ca/en-ca)  
https://www.connexontario.ca/en-ca
- [CEP Alcohol Use Disorder Tool](https://cep.health/media/uploaded/20191003-CEP_AUD-rev.12_UPDATED.pdf)  
https://cep.health/media/uploaded/20191003-CEP\_AUD-rev.12\_UPDATED.pdf
- [Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction Alcohol and Risk Screening and Treatment Resources](https://www.ccsa.ca)  
https://www.ccsa.ca
- [Canada's Low Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines](https://www.ccsa.ca/canadas-low-risk-alcohol-drinking-guidelines-brochure)  
https://www.ccsa.ca/canadas-low-risk-alcohol-drinking-guidelines-brochure
- [Canadian Guidelines on Alcohol Use Disorder Among Older Adults](https://ccsmh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Final_Alcohol_Use_DisorderV6.pdf)  
https://ccsmh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Final\_Alcohol\_Use\_DisorderV6.pdf
- [Mentoring, Education, and Clinical Tools for Addiction: Partners in Health Integration \(META:PHI\)](http://www.metaphi.ca/raam-clinics/)  
http://www.metaphi.ca/raam-clinics/
- [Tools and resources on Quorum](https://quorum.hqontario.ca/en/Home/Posts/Problematic-Alcohol-Use-and-Alcohol-Use-Disorder-Quality-Standard-Tools-for-Implementation)  
https://quorum.hqontario.ca/en/Home/Posts/Problematic-Alcohol-Use-and-Alcohol-Use-Disorder-Quality-Standard-Tools-for-Implementation