

# Disulfiram

Disulfiram treats alcohol use disorder by blocking alcohol's metabolism. People cannot drink any alcohol while taking disulfiram (or within two weeks of stopping it), as it will cause extremely painful and dangerous hangovers. Otherwise, disulfiram is well tolerated.

Do not start disulfiram if you have drunk alcohol in the last 12 hours.

Disulfiram works best when used with counseling for alcohol.

## How to Take Disulfiram

Disulfiram can be taken morning or night, with or without food. Many people enlist a family member to help them take it regular so they do not relapse into alcohol use.

## Side Effects

Drowsiness, tiredness, headache, acne, and metallic/garlic-like taste in the mouth may occur as your body gets used to the medication.

Very rarely, disulfiram can cause liver disease. It may carry risks in people who have had psychosis or have severe heart disease.

Avoid all alcoholic beverages or alcohol-containing products and foods (e.g., **cough and cold syrups, mouthwash, aftershave (the alcohol in aftershave can be absorbed into the blood stream), sauces with alcohol in them, and vinegars – which can contain trace amounts of alcohol**) while taking this medication and for two weeks after stopping the medication. Mixing disulfiram with alcohol causes severe reactions include flushing, throbbing headache, breathing problems (e.g., shortness of breath, fast breathing), nausea, vomiting, dizziness, extreme tiredness, fainting, fast/irregular heartbeat, or blurred vision. These symptoms can last from 30 minutes to several hours.

During pregnancy, this medication should be used only when clearly needed. Discuss the risks and benefits with your doctor. It is not known whether this drug passes into breast milk.

## Drug Interactions

Disulfiram may interact with amitriptyline, "blood thinners" (e.g., warfarin), certain medications for seizures (e.g., hydantoins such as phenytoin/fosphenytoin), isoniazid, and theophylline.

## Key Points

1. Disulfiram prevents alcohol use because it causes severe reactions when people drink on it.
2. Do not start if you have drunk alcohol within 12 hours.
3. The dangerous alcohol interaction lasts for up to two weeks after stopping disulfiram.

Disulfiram can increase the side effects of caffeine.

This medication may interfere with certain laboratory tests (including urine VMA/HVA tests), possibly causing false test results. Make sure laboratory personnel and all your doctors know you use this drug.

## What if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If it is near the time of the next dose, skip the missed dose and resume your usual dosing schedule. Do not double the dose to catch up.

## How to store and dispose of medication

- Keep out of the reach of children.
- Store away from heat, direct light and damp places.
- To safely dispose of unwanted pills: Do not pour in the toilet or sink (it will enter the water supply). To prevent children or pets from eating it, mix unwanted pills in a bag

with water and inedible trash (such as coffee grounds) and throw in the garbage.

**Cost and insurance coverage**

Disulfiram is available in generic. If you are paying out of pocket, you will find the lowest cost at [www.GoodRx.com](http://www.GoodRx.com).

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 6/26/2025