

A REHABILITATION GUIDE:

**What you need to know before,
during and after rehab**



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1. INTRODUCTION

Addiction is a serious problem for millions of people. Many addicts and alcoholics experience their lives spiralling out of control and come to believe that a normal life is forever out of their reach. Usually, when the addiction is discovered, the lives of their loved ones are turned upside down and feelings of concern and confusion may be terribly overwhelming and difficult to bear. Everyone knows that something must be done, but what? It soon becomes clear that the immensity of the situation is greater than the help that anyone alone can offer. Rest assured: Help is available and recovery is possible.

This guide will provide information on topics such as; how to deal with breaking through the denial of a pre-contemplative chemical dependent, finding the correct treatment program, what happens in a rehabilitation facility and what to do when treatment has been completed.



2. ADDICTION REVEALED

Alcoholism and addiction are classified by the World Health Organisation as brain diseases, which have proved to be chronic and progressive. Do not blame yourself if your efforts to assist an addict or alcoholic to beat their disease have fallen short and their addiction continued on a downward spiral.

During the process when normal use turns into abuse, the **chemistry in the brain** gets disrupted and the pleasure centre of the brain starts to make a connection between the use of a substance and feeling good. This leads to the brain wanting more of the substances more frequently, in order to keep on feeling as good as it did.

Due to the brain chemical disturbance and its side effects, addicts and alcoholics lose the ability to problem solve effectively and think rationally. Constant abuse can have side effects like anxiety, depression, hallucinations and paranoia. Certain substances can cause mental health to become a continuing and long-term issue, plaguing the sufferer and their families.

A further effect of the abuse, is that the chemical dependent's health will start suffering. They invariably stop taking care of themselves. They do not get sufficient sleep and sustenance. Their lungs, hearts and other organs take strain because of the constant abuse, which puts them at risk of disease and even death.

If the addiction progresses, the user's physical and mental health will continue to deteriorate, until **professional help** is inevitable.



3. FINDING SUPPORT BEFORE TRYING TO HELP

Coping with **addiction** can be extremely overwhelming and knowing where to turn can be mind-boggling. We know that time is of the essence, but it serves us to stand still for a short while to find out how to seek the most appropriate assistance we need.

As family or loved ones of an addict or alcoholic in need of help, you will probably deal with an onslaught of emotions. It is vital that those who try to find help for a loved one, also seek support for themselves. In finding help they are empowered to assist.

The ear of a family member, friend, clergy member or counsellor can be of great benefit when seeking help for a loved one. The internet is a great source of help, but can be completely overwhelming. The services of treatment facility agencies are great sources of support in steering you in the right direction. The correct thing to do is to point your loved ones to a professional treatment facility for help. Here, the most thorough and applicable care will be received.

Before embarking on a conversation with your loved one about seeking help, do research and receive guidance from treatment centre agencies to find the most appropriate and pocket-fit facility for your loved one. Make sure you are prepared for the conversation and have all the information you may need. To be unprepared is setting yourself up for failure.



4. WHERE TO TURN TO FOR HELP

Addiction is a **serious illness** that carries pain and brokenness with it for everyone involved. It is best treated in a closely monitored environment to be effective. You will not hesitate to seek medical help for constant discomfort or chronic pain. Seeking help for addiction is not an admittance of weakness or a character flaw, it is the smartest move one can make to help someone work toward living the healthiest, happiest life possible.

Before you challenge your loved one about his using or drinking, it is strongly recommended that you find the best fit treatment program for him or her. It is important to look for a facility that work towards accountability, while providing a safety net. Finding the right treatment facility provides the first building block toward a foundation that upholds sober living. It is a difficult step to take, but one that can have a lasting impact on the user's life.

4.1 Category of addiction

For the best treatment results, it is important that you find a facility that offers a program customised for your loved ones specific addiction. Most rehab facilities offer programs for most type of drug addictions and alcoholism, but addictions like **sex, gambling** and **food**, may need more specialised facilities. Make sure that the facility you have in mind, caters for your loved one's specific addiction.

4.2 In- and out-patient

In-patient facilities are best suited for people with serious addictions and those who can take time out of their lives to work on their recovery away from normal life. Here, care is provided with round-the-clock healthcare and appropriate supervision to allow recovery without temptation. **Out-patient** facilities cater more for people with less serious addictions or for substance abusers who cannot leave their daily lives in order to get better. Be aware of these different options and ensure that the selected facility offers the type of stay your loved one will need.

“Addiction is a serious illness that carries pain and brokenness with it for everyone involved”

4.3 Addressing individual needs

Successful treatment programs share significant treatment components, but people need to fit into those programs. Ensure that there is room for slight adaptations to the program to ensure that your loved one can and will be accommodated. Professional and effective rehab centres will approach each person as an individual in order to devise a program that suits specific needs. When speaking to an Intake Coordinator or Counsellor, ask them how they ensure that they meet individual needs. If your loved one needs specific medical care, ensure that the facility can cater for those or any other special needs, like wheelchair access or specialised therapy.

4.4 Detox

It is important to find out if you or your loved one will need **detox**. Before a recovery program can be joined, the body must be rid of the chemical substances being abused. Make sure that the facility you have in mind offers safe and closely monitored detox, during which your loved one will be kept as comfortable as possible.



4.5 Addiction is a family disease

Addiction has the ability to ravage families and everyone suffers in some way. Check if the facility you have in mind subscribes to **supporting the family members** of the addict. A facility that offers family meetings and counselling is enabling the whole family to work together to overcome addiction and helps to build a strong support foundation from where recovery can be built.

4.6 After treatment

Ensure that the facility you are considering offers **aftercare** for the recovering addict. Recovery is a life-long journey and does not end when the person leaves the treatment centre. The facility must have a program that offers continuing recovery support to the addicts and alcoholics who leave their facility.

4.7 Payment

Professional private rehabilitation costs money. Most private rehabilitation facilities are registered with the appropriate medical and government bodies in their countries. Ensure that the facility you are looking at is properly and appropriately registered, because your **Private Medical Insurance** (PMI in the UK) or **Medical Aid** (South Africa) will cover a large portion of the cost, if not all of it. Most proper facilities will get a pre-authorisation from your medical cover supplier, to confirm how much they will cover. Some employers offer treatment options for mental health conditions, including addiction. If payment is a problem, feel free to talk to the facility of your choice about paying a deposit and arranging a payment plan.



5. ADDRESSING THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

In hardly enough cases, the addict or alcoholic is brought to his knees and ask for help. But, unfortunately, in most cases, family or friends need to **intervene** and have THAT conversation with the chemical dependent. This is an incredibly difficult thing to do, but approaching the talk thoroughly prepared and from a stance of love, instead of judging and accusing, will significantly increase the chances of a positive result.

As mentioned before, addiction is a progressive disease, this makes it imperative to **intervene as soon as possible after the problem has become known**. There is nothing like a perfect time to have the discussion, but sooner rather than later will always stand you in good stead. It is extremely important that all parties to the conversation be calm and sober. Allow yourself some time to collect your thoughts and gather data on addiction or alcoholism and treatment options and then approach your loved one with concern, compassion and love, rather than with fear and anger.

It is advisable to start the talk by telling the alcoholic or addict that the signs of the addiction have been too disturbing to ignore it any longer. Express your feelings of concern in a calm tone, regardless of the reaction received. Be firm that the situation cannot continue as is and insist that help be sought.

Be ready to be faced with **denial**, as it is a most common defence mechanism of chemical dependents. The user is not only suffering from the effects of substance abuse and addiction, but also feels ashamed and embarrassed, and will probably be reluctant to admit to the abuse. The person may get angry, emotionally upset and refuse to get help time and again, but all parties should be firm in their insistence that help is needed and they should continue to discuss this matter with the user until help is obtained. The addict or alcoholic may not want to discuss their problem, but keep the communication lines open and be available for a talk at any time. Remember that few first discussions result in help being sought, but keep at it, as you are planting seeds of thoughts that will grow until the user is ready for help.

In many cases, people will not admit to the problem and will **continue to refuse help**. Parents or loved ones of these people, as well as ones of children and those suffering from mental illness, may have to make the decision of admitting the person without their consent. Sometimes, we have both the right and an obligation to seek treatment on the addict's behalf. Taking that step is one of the most loving things a person can do for someone they love. It is a bold, courageous step that denies addiction the right to rule over a person any longer.

For a detailed guide on staging an intervention, click here: www.wedorecover.com/alcohol-treatment-documents/We-Do-Recover--Interventions-Guide.pdf



6. WHAT TO EXPECT IN A REHABILITATION FACILITY

A person should not enter rehabilitation expecting to be cured at the end of it. Addiction recovery is a lifelong process, of which following a program in a rehabilitation facility is only the first stage. They have to realise that they are going to receive help in getting clean and sober, and that they will learn how to live a productive and addiction-free life. After rehab, recovering addicts have to return to normal life and need to use the knowledge and skills acquired in rehab in order to maintain long-term sobriety.

6.1 The intake

The person being admitted for treatment will initially meet with an intake counsellor to discuss the severity of the addiction and how it has affected the individual's life and health. This conversation will probably only last an hour, but it is the first and vital step on the recovery journey. Having the support of caring professionals in one's corner makes all the difference.

6.2 Withdrawal and detox

Chemical dependants may experience **withdrawal symptoms** once they stop using or drinking. When a person stops cold turkey, the altered brain chemistry sends messages of physical and emotional pain to the user, making it difficult and dangerous to quit alone. It normally lasts a few days. When a person is experiencing withdrawal symptoms, he/she will need to undergo detoxification, which is a process that needs to be supervised medically in a safe environment. This is the process during which the person's brain and body re-learn how to function without their drug of choice and can be dangerous if not properly supervised.

6.3 General health

In order to address addiction properly, just like other diseases, requires medical treatment and professional care. Invariably the person being admitted for treatment will undergo some form of medical examination and psychological assessment. This will assist the counselling team to ascertain **what physical or mental illness goes with the addiction**. It is sometimes difficult to ascertain if health issues occur in conjunction with substance abuse or because of it. Healthcare professionals can provide effective solutions for mental and physical health issues to enable the individual to work toward regaining the best possible health. Recovery from addiction depends on these issues being treated. Treating their physical and psychological health makes them better-equipped to work toward sobriety.

6.4 Counselling

It is impossible for most people to overcome addiction without appropriate support. **Counselling** is a vital part of any effective addictions treatment program. The addiction counsellors are trained to address addiction and have the experience and expertise to do so compassionately, while providing the support needed for recovery. People in rehabs will see their dedicated addiction counsellor for individual counselling sessions about once a week and more if their condition justifies it. They will also attend group counselling with their peers, who are also overcoming addiction and who understand what they are going through. This compassion and fellow assistance are incredibly powerful tools in recovery. Though the love and support from family members and friends are important, they are seldom equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to help someone break free from addiction. Most reputable treatment facilities will run some form of family program, involving family counselling sessions, to assist loved ones to deal with the addiction and teach them how to best support the addict/alcoholic to maintain sobriety.

Every type of counselling is essential, as it helps the recovering user address different parts of addiction and learn how to overcome them. The aim of the therapy is to focus on helping the recovery people to change their attitudes and behaviours regarding drug use and to teach them how to live healthy and addiction-free lives.

6.5 Life skills

In treatment, a significant amount of time and energy is spent on teaching the recovering addicts/alcoholics how to deal with life's stressors and strains in healthy ways. They are taught practical ways in which to handle day-to-day tasks in the most effective ways. These newly learned skills build upon one another, enabling the person in recovery to use a set of "life-tools" once they finish treatment, which will appropriately assist them to live life, not only clean, but fully and happily too.

7. Duration

Most addicts and alcoholics believe that they can receive treatment for 30 days, or even less, and be fully recovered from their addiction. In reality, most programs take much longer to be fully effective and 21 to 30 days is the absolute minimum period for an initial **treatment period**. Research is proving that the best recovery outcomes occur after treatment of about 90 days. It is recommended that recovering addicts and alcoholics should therefore be prepared to dedicate several months to this rehabilitation process.

Many people in treatment facilities want to leave before the end of their program, because they feel strong enough. It is of the utmost importance to complete the entire treatment program to build the strongest foundation possible for sober living.

8. Afterwards

Addiction is a disease and needs to be treated like a disease. Just like a diabetic has to do certain things daily to stay healthy, addicts and alcoholics also need to, once they have left treatment, uphold a strong recovery routine to keep them clean. The most important of these things are:

Start again. Leaving rehab clean and sober creates a new chance for everyone involved. Addiction shattered dreams, but if the recovering person does everything that needs to be done to remain sober, the slate may be wiped clean and a new journey embarked on.

One step at a time. Thinking of staying clean or sober for the rest of their lives seems completely overwhelming and something that cannot be done. It is good practise to start focussing on staying clean one day at a time. This feels do-able. If needed, the recovering person can break their day down into hour-by-hour or even minute-by-minute sections and focus on staying clean for only that short period.

Learn to reach out. Asking for help is not easy, but a recovering user who accepts that it needs to be done, and who comes into the habit of doing so, is setting himself up for a great chance of staying clean and sober. Their **support system** becomes a vital part of relapse prevention and that is where programs like Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) become an integral part of their recovery and support-base.

Apply new skills. Sobriety is a lifestyle. Back home, recovering people need to use every opportunity possible to apply what they were taught in rehab. Practice does not make perfect, but continual practice helps to form new, healthy habits. The recovering person needs to be constantly mindful of their health, while **avoiding temptation** and reducing stress are all a part of their skills set in working the program to maintain sober living.

Aftercare. An essential component of treatment is to continue assisting the individual who has left treatment, in order to strengthen their foundation of sobriety. Effective rehabilitation centres offer aftercare. This entails meetings, normally about once a week at the rehab facility, where the addict/alcoholic can continue building on the life skills and support acquired during their time in rehab. It can also include further counselling, therapeutic workshops and life skills classes. It assists them in learning more about **avoiding triggers** and temptations now that they are back living life.



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9. Conclusion

We trust that this Rehabilitation Guide has gone some way in giving an understanding and insight of what addition and alcoholism are, how to seek help, what to look for when seeking help, what to expect from a treatment facility, what happens in rehab centres and what to do once treatment is over.

Although we tried to give much useful information as possible, it is impossible to capture the extent of addiction and its treatment in a few words.

For more information and further details, call us on **+27 (0)82 747 3422** in SA or **0800 955 4357** in the UK.

