# Detoxification Encyclopedia Article

## Detoxification

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# Detoxification

The term "detoxification" describes the process that a drug- or alcohol-dependent person goes through when reducing the level of the substance in his or her body, or eliminating it entirely. Chronic (long-term) use of a drug can result in **physical dependence**. Stopping the use of that drug can cause a **withdrawal** syndrome. The goal of detoxification is to help the drug abuser make a safe and comfortable transition from withdrawal to being drug-free.

The detoxification process usually takes place in a supportive environment, often a hospital or clinic. It might also involve the use of medications to control or suppress symptoms and signs of withdrawal. The level of care and whether medications are used depends on which substance was abused and the severity of the withdrawal syndrome. It also depends on medical complications the person might have as a result of the drug or other conditions. The most severe complications of withdrawal occur from substances such as alcohol and **sedative-hypnotics** (such as the barbiturate Seconal and the benzodiazepine Valium). Detoxification is generally the first step in the process of recovering from alcohol or drug addiction.

## See Also

Addiction: Concepts and Definitions; Alcohol: Withdrawal; Benzodiazepine Withdrawal; Cocaine: Withdrawal; Nonabused Drugs Withdrawal; Treatment Types: an Overview.