



## Fact Sheet

### **How to keep yourself safe when helping a friend/ relative or partner detox.**

We thank you for volunteering to help look after your friend/ relative/ partner through the time they need to detoxify. As they are not going into hospital for detoxification, you need to be there to let Addaction know if things are not going to plan so you can be helped to support them. You are playing a vital role in your friend/ relative/ partner's recovery from alcohol dependency. With your support there is every chance of a full recovery, however you must not forget about your own needs or the rest of the families.

You will accompany your friend/ relative/ partner to and from the project for at least the first 3 days, each day to see the nurse for medical checks and to discuss their progress.

Here are some useful tips to help your friend/ relative or partner and tips on how to keep you safe:

#### **Information:**

Please read the patient information sheet to find out more on how you can support your friend/ relative/ partner. Remember to ask as many questions as you like when visiting the project. It is important that you feel supported too. You can also go to your local Family and Friends drop- in before and during the start the detox to get support and advise. (Attached will be a list of all the drop- in and support groups in your area)

#### **Safety:**

During the detox your friend/ relative/ partner may be shaky, unstable and very sleepy, don't worry this is normal and is a common symptom when going through the detoxification process. If they get the shakes suggest a hot bath as this will help them calm down and their muscles will start to relax. To avoid accidents you should supervise their smoking. Do not let them drive, operate machinery or attempt to pour boiling water. During the detox period try to make sure that they are in a safe and secure setting.

### Surroundings:

You can help by trying to keep the home as calm and relaxing as possible to avoid unnecessary stress. If it helps try to treat the situation as if you were nursing your friend/ relative/ partner through a bout of flu, even though it is somewhat different the symptoms can be very similar.

Your friend/ relative/ partner may complain of feeling anxious or seem to be more irritable. This is to be expected, don't worry, as he/she will get through it. Try to reassure them and remain calm. Try to avoid conflict and don't be confrontational as this may make them worse. If you feel this is becoming worse do tell your nurse who is supervising the detoxification. Remember they are there to support you too.

It is possible that your friend/ relative/ partner may be feeling restless, anxious or irritable. Try your best to keep this quiet and calm. In the rare event of your friend/ relative/ partner becoming:-

- Badly unstable or trembling
- Feverish or confused
- Seeing or hearing things
- Losing consciousness
- Having a fit
- Eye problems
- Severe memory problems
- Drowsy or losing consciousness



**THEN CALL AN AMBULANCE 999**

### Fluids:

Encourage your friend/ relative/ partner to drink plenty of fluids,

#### Tips:

- Milk may help to ease digestive problems
- Sweetened/ sugary drinks will prevent the blood sugar from falling too low
- Orange juice is **best avoided** as it may irritate the stomach and cause nausea



### Food:

Try to offer your friend/ relative/ partner small regular meals, however don't worry if they are off their food for a few days, they will be fine as long as you have kept up their sugary fluids.

When making them small meals try to make them easy to manage, for example:

#### Tips:

- Avoid small foods, such as peas or sweet corn, although they are a vegetable and good for you it becomes impossible for the person to eat if they have the shakes. They will struggle to



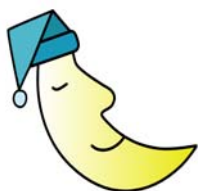
get the fork near their mouth and will become annoyed that they cannot complete a simple task.

- Try to give them food that they can eat with their hands, such as sandwiches, fruit cut into manageable pieces.
- Give them some soup in a mug, to provide them with some nutrients and keep them warm.
- Don't make the drinks very hot if they are shaky in case they spill it and scald themselves.



### Sleep:

Rest is very important; when you can it is important to make sure your friend/ relative/ partner gets plenty of rest to help the body recover. Make sure the room is as relaxing as possible, lots of cushions, candles and natural oils are useful. It is also important that you get rest too. Go to your GP if you find it hard to sleep, or start to feel anxious and/ or depressed.



### Medication:

The drugs that have been prescribed should only be taken as directed. It is very dangerous to drink alcohol while taking the medication. If your friend/ relative/ partner drinks alcohol ensure that no further medication is taken and tell the nurse in the morning.

To date, no one under the supervision of Addaction has had a fit whilst on an ambulatory detoxification. If one should occur, take the following emergency action:

- **Ring for an ambulance**
- **Lay them on their side, in the recovery position**
- **If they have anything in their pockets, remove them**



The fit will soon pass and they will go into a semiconscious state. When the ambulance arrives, describe in detail what happened.

### You:

It is very important not to forget **yourself** during your friend/ relative/ partner's detox. It is important to look after yourself and get the support you need.



### **Tips:**

- Stay in touch with other family and friends
- Let other people help. Family and friends may want to help, but if you prefer there are drop-in's, support groups and help lines where you can talk to other people who may share your concerns or answer your questions. (Don't forget to look at the attached sheet of all the drop-ins near you)
- Make time for yourself
- Keep yourself strong and healthy by regularly eating and drinking.
- Don't bottle it up, find someone to talk to.

To find out where your nearest family support service is contact us at the Family and Friends Network on: **01243 537011**(office hours).

### **Support:**

You are the main carer during this process and should be kept informed at all times. So be involved, attend meetings and have your say in your friend/ relative/ partners care plan. Try and understand what is going on and how you can help. You can learn about alcohol, recovery and long-term support for you and your friend/ relative/ partner.

Remember, recovery is for the whole family/group and you all may experience changes in how you all relate to each other. The most important thing to remember is take time out to talk to each other about how things are going and communicate.

