



Dependence is when alcohol or other drugs cause physical and psychological changes in a person. This leads to them spending a lot of time thinking about, obtaining and using alcohol or other drugs, and recovering from the effects.

Dependence has **physical** and **psychosocial** elements, both of which need to be addressed for recovery to occur. People will differ in the rate of recovery and in the types of interventions they require, and their needs will change as they recover from addiction.

Recovery is not just about abstinence, though it may be a long-term goal. Recovery for the individual means achieving the highest level of autonomy of which they are capable.

Brief interventions provide information about alcohol and drug use. The emphasis is on increasing a person's awareness of the risks and negative aspects of drug use. The aim is to motivate them to reduce or stop use, or to consider treatment.

Interventions to **manage withdrawal** ensure that the physical process for eliminating a drug of dependence can be completed with safety and comfort. **Relapse** to drug use is extremely common, unless managed withdrawal is followed by an appropriate rehabilitation program.

Relapse prevention interventions help people recognise cues and risk factors for drug use, and develop strategies to resist drug use. Relapse prevention may be supported by the use of medications to control cravings, block euphoric effects, or cause aversive effects when combined with the drug of dependence.

Some people may need to **develop living skills** to support their reintegration into the community. People who are more severely affected by substance use, criminal activity and social disadvantage are most likely to need living skills development. Residential settings are often used to provide a safe environment for living skills development to help them to reconnect.

Support entails linking people to services for practical needs (housing, employment, financial management) and reestablishing relationships (family issues, building networks unrelated to drug

use). Support may come from mutual-support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, family members or service organisations.

Substitution treatment involves prescription of medication that is similar to the drug of dependence, but with less risk of harm. Substitution treatment is delivered in conjunction with psychosocial support. This allows the individual to address underlying psychological issues with the physical dimension of dependence being addressed when they are psychologically ready.

About the Recovery Pathway

Associate Professor Robert Ali and Associate Professor Linda Gowing developed and have used concepts relating to a treatment framework in activities related to training and guideline development for around 10 years. When developing a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) in 2015, it became necessary to consolidate these concepts into a more concrete model. The Recovery Pathway is the result. Others involved in the design of the MOOC also contributed to this presentation of the Recovery Pathway. In particular we acknowledge the input of Femke Buisman-Pijlman, Travis Clapp, and Joshua Burton.