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# Is Alcohol A Problem? Online Tool Helps Assess Risk And Find Help

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Heard on [Morning Edition](#)



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*Kristen Uroda for NPR*

The thinking about problem drinking and alcoholism has changed. It's no longer considered a black-and-white, you have it or you don't condition.

"We now know that there's a full spectrum in alcohol use disorder," says [George Koob](#), the director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, part of the National Institutes of Health. You can have a mild, moderate or severe problem.

And there's not a one-size-fits-all approach to getting help. There is a [wide range of options](#) — from residential "detox" programs to cognitive behavioral therapy, to medications such as naltrexone that can [help people drink less](#), or [acamprosate](#), which can help people stay dry. But many people who might need help don't know these options exist. It's a big obstacle to treatment.



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"A lot of people struggling with alcohol problems do not know where to turn," Koob says. "Ninety percent of adults in the U.S. with an alcohol use disorder don't get any treatment whatsoever."

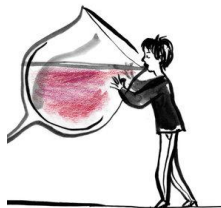
That's a lot of people, given that an estimated 17 million adults have alcohol use disorder.

To help solve this problem, the NIH has launched an online [Alcohol Treatment Navigator](#). It's a website that helps people explore all the evidence-based options.

The site is user-friendly. A list of questions helps determine the best treatment choices. A brief [survey](#) helps to determine the range or severity of a problem. The site also connects people to directories of providers. You can type in your ZIP code to find options in your community.

For instance, there's a link to a [directory of licensed professional counselors](#), licensed clinical social workers, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists and other therapists maintained by *Psychology Today*. There's also a [directory of treatment programs](#), including residential rehab and outpatient options, which is maintained by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, a federal agency. The NIH does not endorse any providers, it's simply connecting people to the options. The navigator site also has information about costs and insurance.

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Research suggests that most people with an alcohol problem can benefit from treatment. According to the NIAAA, about one-third of people who get treatment for an alcohol use disorder are better one year after treatment. "Many others substantially reduce their drinking and report fewer alcohol-related problems," according to [this](#) NIAAA explainer.

The new navigator site comes at a time when drinking is [on the rise](#) among women, minorities and older adults in the U.S. Dietary guidelines recommend that women should not drink more than one drink per day, and men should not exceed two drinks per day. But a recent [study](#) estimates that nearly 32 million adults in the U.S. drink at least occasionally at dangerously high levels.

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