

Q & A Mindline



Dr Roshan Jain
Senior Consultant Psychiatrist &
De-addiction Specialist
Apollo Hospitals, Bangalore

Q Why is there a relapse post the treatment for addiction?

We need to remember that chemical dependency/addiction is a disease prone to relapse. With treatment and therapy, the risk is reduced, but not abated, altogether. One has to make consistent efforts to maintain abstinence from substances or a harmful activity and work on sustaining a positive, healthy lifestyle.

Any medicinal detoxification only eases the discomfort caused by withdrawal symptoms, but it's the associated psychotherapy that equips individuals with the necessary life skills and coping skills, to remain drug-free and to break negative habits. For many, an addiction treatment program must incorporate the above, along with aftercare planning, to address every issue of potential relapse.

The individual and family need to understand that relapse is a process and perhaps an opportunity to gain a better understanding of one and to make efforts to remedy it at the earliest opportunity. An effective relapse prevention program engages and educates, both the individual and

family, right from the onset.

If an individual is only given a supply of medicines to quit a drug that is being taken, then it's not going to work. There needs to be concerted effort via formal psychological methods to educate, engage and empower individuals and their family or close friends, so that all efforts can be made for a more harmonious life.

Q Please shed some light on detox and self-detox.

Detox implies the clearing of toxins from the body of an individual who is abusing it and who is dependent on substances (alcohol, opiates or prescribed drugs). Detoxification is a process whereby a person pushes out the substance(s) in question, out of his/her system. It's a medical intervention which aims at controlling acute intoxication and a substance withdrawal state.

Importantly, detoxification minimizes physical discomfort during the withdrawal state and aims to reduce or decrease the harm caused by drug addiction. However, detoxification is only the first step to recovery and by itself, cannot completely get rid of addiction.

Self-detox is commonly known as cold turkey. Herein, a person simply stops using the substance in question, without any medical or professional support. This approach can be difficult, extremely uncomfortable in opiate withdrawals (severe body pain and cramps), and dangerous in alcohol and tranquilizer (like alprazolam, lorazepam, and clonazepam) withdrawal states, as there is a risk of fits and a state of confusion.

When self-detox is uncomfortable, the person will revert to drugs or alcohol use again. Worse, it will re-enforce the belief that it's not possible to come off substance(s) safely. Therefore, guided

detox by a professional with or without medicinal intervention, has significantly higher rates of success, leading to the addict becoming drug-free or minimising harm with reduced substance use.

Q Is the drug rehabilitation program a long-term process?

It should be as long as is required to enable the change that an individual wants, but has struggled to achieve. The duration of a rehabilitation program depends on the person and extent of his/her engagement with offered therapy and the treatment program. Intervention may involve various phases like motivational enhancement, problem identification, working on personality difficulties, addressing attitude and lifestyle issues, helping change physical health and enable adaptive coping mechanisms, as well as relapse prevention techniques, besides supervised medicinal detoxification.

Q Do you think online consultation can offer effective therapy and supportive sessions for mental health and drug addiction problems?

Technology-aided consultation is becoming inevitable and an essential part of service provision. Also, it is second only to face-to-face meetings. When a session is video-based, it can be as effective and thorough. In the mental health arena, it can be an effective way of offering therapy, support, aftercare and family intervention.

Online consultation offers confidential sessions in the comfort of one's own space and at a convenient time. Such a method can also overcome stigma, geographical restriction and commuting hassles.

Website: www.roshanjain.com