

Ask your mental health clinician to learn more about post-acute withdrawal syndrome.

RESOURCES



Veteran's Crisis Line

1.800.273.8255

text 838255



VA Resources

www.va.gov/health-care/health-needs-conditions/substance-use-problems/



Rehabilitation resources for Veterans

americanaddictioncenters.org/rehab-guide/veterans-resources

Post-Acute Withdrawal Syndrome from Alcohol



VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs





Addiction is a brain disease in which there is compulsive substance use despite **harmful consequences**.

Post-Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS):

- PAWS can occur when a person who drinks alcohol excessively stops drinking alcohol.
- PAWS can last weeks to years after stopping alcohol.
- PAWS is different from acute withdrawal, which occurs in the week after a person stops drinking.
- PAWS increases the risk for recurrence.

Common Symptoms of PAWS:

- Feeling on edge; irritated or uneasy
- Difficulty sleeping
- Not finding pleasure in activities
- Feeling tired most of the time
- Difficulty concentrating
- Worsening memory
- Urge to use alcohol



Treating Symptoms of PAWS:

- Gabapentin can treat PAWS. However, it is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of PAWS.
- Gabapentin is most helpful with treating lack of pleasure, difficulty sleeping and feeling on edge or uneasy.
- Gabapentin can be safely used even if a person has liver disease. Precautions are needed in persons with kidney disease.
- Gabapentin is taken three times a day.

Gabapentin Side Effects:

- While most people experience few, if any, side effects, the following are possible:
 - Feeling sleepy or tired
 - Dizziness
 - Difficulty with balance or coordination
 - Blurry vision
 - Upset stomach
- Higher than recommended doses of gabapentin should not be used. Contact a clinician if there is an urge to use more than the prescribed dose.
- Older age and lung conditions such as COPD may put a person at higher risk for side effects from gabapentin.
- Certain medications can slow down breathing when taken with gabapentin. Veterans should review their medications with their clinicians before starting gabapentin.

