



Alcoholism



Length of Disability ▾

No one should be permitted to work under the influence of alcohol.

– Psychotherapy and supportive treatment, alcoholism.

Duration in Days

Job Class ¹	Minimum	Optimum	Maximum
All Work	7	28	42

Factors Influencing Duration

The length of disability is influenced by the duration and severity of alcohol dependence, the presence or absence of organ damage, any comorbid mental illness, other substance abuse, the individual's social support system, the appropriateness of treatment, the individual's compliance with treatment, and the adequacy of ongoing care.

Ability to Work ▾

Many employers have systems in place for individuals recovering from alcohol dependence disorders to return to work under special contracts or conditions. These conditions may provide guidelines for random testing of blood, breath, sweat, and urine levels of identified substances and provide work performance and substance abuse treatment guidelines for the recovering individual.

Temporary work accommodations may include reducing or eliminating activities where the safety of self or others is contingent upon a constant and/or high level of alertness, such as driving motor vehicles, operating complex machinery, or handling dangerous chemicals; introducing the individual to new or stressful situations gradually under individually appropriate supervision; allowing some flexibility in scheduling to attend therapy appointments (which normally should occur during the employee's personal time); promoting planned, proactive management of identified problem areas; and offering timely feedback on job performance issues. It will be helpful if accommodations are documented in a written plan designed to promote a timely and safe transition back to full work productivity. A shift change to day shift may be necessary for more adequate monitoring.

If individuals have chronic adverse effects of prolonged alcohol intake, such as cardiac, liver, or nervous system damage, they may need to be transferred to sedentary activities. Certain jobs, such as being a bartender, hostess, or entertainer, may involve exposure to alcohol and increase the risk of relapse.

Risk

An individual who is alcohol-dependent may present a safety risk to both the individual and his or her coworkers; therefore, such individuals must be closely monitored and assigned only to job duties that are not safety-sensitive. Risk of recurrence may be reduced by eliminating exposure to alcohol in the workplace, performing regular yet random blood and/or urine tests to ensure compliance with the work contract, and by encouraging participation in therapy and support groups during the individual's personal time.

Capacity

Capacity is unaffected unless the individual comes to work inebriated, in which case he or she should be prevented from working. Prolonged alcoholism may contribute to impaired memory and coordination, peripheral neuropathy, and chronic illnesses, all of which may reduce productivity and work safety over time.

Tolerance

Tolerance is not a concern with this diagnosis. AA remains the most effective organization for treatment. Individuals recovering from alcohol or substance abuse require engaging in support groups, [counseling](#), and/or [cognitive behavioral therapy](#) to help with motivation and compliance.

Accommodations

Temporary accommodations may be needed for individuals who show up to work intoxicated and need to be sent home. Individuals with recurrent alcohol intoxication may require a flexible schedule to attend rehabilitation meetings and sessions, although this should normally occur during the employee's own time. Individuals who normally participate in work-related social events at which alcohol is served may require restrictions from attending such events, and those who work in restaurants or bars may require permanent reassignment ("Alcoholism").