



Please call 911 if you think you have a medical emergency.

Alcohol Intoxication, Physician Treatment and Follow-up

Treatment: No specific treatment can reverse the effects of alcohol intoxication.

- Intoxicated people often receive IV fluids and B complex vitamins for dehydration (alcohol is a diuretic and increases urine output) as a precaution or treatment for vitamin deficiency that can cause serious brain injury.
- In severe cases—those of severe stupor and coma—the person should be intubated (breathing tube placed in airway) to support respirations (which may stop spontaneously) and to protect the lungs from filling with vomit.
 - Intubation involves placing a short, flexible plastic tube into the windpipe to just below the vocal cords and connecting the tube to a respirator machine. The tip of the tube has a small donut-shaped balloon around it, which is inflated to seal the end of the tube to the inside of the windpipe. This accomplishes two things:
 - It prevents the air from the respirator from leaking out into the mouth instead of going into the lungs.
 - It provides a protective seal so that a large amount of vomit in the mouth would be prevented from entering the lungs where it would cause a great deal of damage and possibly suffocation.

Follow-up: Barring any major complications, most intoxicated people may go home from the hospital's Emergency Department. For some medical and many legal reasons, most hospitals prefer to keep people suspected of alcohol intoxication under observation until their blood alcohol concentration (BAC) falls to below 100 mg/dL.

- In most people, the liver metabolizes about 10 grams of ethanol per hour. This corresponds to a BAC fall of about 20 mg/dL per hour. Thus, the length of time a person (and family) will need to wait until discharge may be expressed by the formula $(\text{BAC}-100)/20 = \text{the wait in hours}$. Example: The BAC from a blood sample drawn at midnight is 280. $(280-100)/20 = 9$. The BAC should fall to 100 mg/dL by 9 am (midnight plus 9 hours).
- A social worker may talk with the intoxicated person prior to discharge from the hospital. The social worker may advise the person to go to an

alcohol treatment center. This is an extremely difficult situation because many people either don't recognize their problem, if they are chronic drinkers, or don't have any desire to correct the situation.

more information from eMedicineHealth

- [When to Seek Medical Care](#)

For more information, read the complete article, Alcohol Intoxication (<http://www.emedicinehealth.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=58696>) on <http://www.emedicinehealth.com>.

WebMD Medical Reference from eMedicineHealth

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