

DSM 5 Criteria for Alcohol Use Disorder

The Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition

The first step to dealing with any problem in a structured way is to define the problem as clearly as possible.

The [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition \(DSM-5\)](#) defines the problem by creating a taxonomy, or classification system, for mental health disorders. Conditions range from anxiety disorders and schizophrenia to substance use disorders and many more.

With the DSM-5, psychiatry and addiction medicine professionals across the United States can use the same terms, assign the proper ICD-10 medical codes, and administer the best recommended treatments for each case.

DSM-5 Alcohol Use Disorder Criteria

According to the DSM-5, alcohol use disorder is “a problematic pattern of alcohol use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as manifested by at least two of the following [criteria], occurring within a 12-month period.”

In other words, if you experienced any two of the symptoms from the following criteria/questionnaire in the past year, you can be diagnosed as having an AUD:

1. Alcohol is often taken in larger amounts or over a longer period than was intended. *[Do you drink more than you mean to?]*
2. There is a persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control alcohol use. *[Do you want to stop, but can't?]*
3. A great deal of time is spent in activities necessary to obtain alcohol, use alcohol, or recover from its effects. *[Is drinking taking over your life?]*

4. Craving, or a strong desire or urge to use alcohol. *[If you can't drink, are you thinking about drinking?]*
5. Recurrent alcohol use resulting in a failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home. *[Is your drinking getting in the way of day-to-day activities?]*
6. Continued alcohol use despite having persistent or recurrent social or interpersonal problems caused or exacerbated by the effects of alcohol. *[Is drinking getting in the way of your relationships?]*
7. Important social, occupational, or recreational activities are given up or reduced because of alcohol use. *[Are you sitting things out because of alcohol?]*
8. Recurrent alcohol use in situations in which it is physically hazardous. *[Are you drinking in risky settings, or doing risky things while drinking?]*
9. Alcohol use is continued despite knowledge of having a persistent or recurrent physical or psychological problem that is likely to have been caused or exacerbated by alcohol. *[Do you know drinking isn't good for you, but you do it anyway?]*
10. Tolerance, as defined by either of the following: a need for markedly increased amounts of alcohol to achieve intoxication or desired effect, or a markedly diminished effect with continued use of the same amount of alcohol. *[Do you need to drink more than you used to?]*
11. Withdrawal, as manifested by either of the following: the characteristic withdrawal syndrome for alcohol, or alcohol (or a closely related substance, such as a benzodiazepine) is taken to relieve or avoid alcohol withdrawal symptoms. *[Do you feel it when you stop drinking?]*

Mild, Moderate, & Severe AUDs

The DSM-5 further classifies AUDs by severity, determined by how many of the eleven diagnostic criteria are met.

- mild AUDs – defined as the presence of 2-3 criteria
- moderate AUDs – defined as the presence of 4-5 criteria
- severe AUDs – defined as the presence of 6 or more criteria