UNITY PATH
FAMILY SUPPORT

UNDERSTANDING DETOX

WHAT IT IS, WHAT TO EXPECT, AND WHY IT MATTERS

Detox is often the first step in recovery. It gives your body a chance to heal so you can move forward with the support and treatment that can help you build a better life.



WHAT IS DETOX?

Detox (short for detoxification) is the process of allowing your body to clear alcohol or other drugs while managing withdrawal symptoms safely.

Detox is not the same as treatment. Recovery continues after detox through ongoing support, treatment, counselling, peer support, or recovery programs.

WHY DETOX CAN BE IMPORTANT

When someone stops using certain substances, their body needs time to adjust.

Withdrawal symptoms can range from mild to severe depending on:

- The substance being used
- How long it has been used
- How much has been used
- Overall physical and mental health
- Whether more than one substance is involved

Some withdrawals can become medical emergencies.

COMMON WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

Symptoms vary from person to person but may include:

- Anxiety or restlessness
- Sweating
- Trouble sleeping
- Nausea or vomiting
- Muscle aches
- Shaking or tremors
- Mood changes
- Fatigue
- Cravings

These symptoms are often temporary and usually improve with time and appropriate support.

WHEN MEDICAL DETOX MAY BE NEEDED

Medical supervision is especially important for withdrawal from:

- Alcohol
- Benzodiazepines (such as Ativan®, Xanax®, Valium®)
- Heavy or long-term substance use
- Multiple substances at the same time

These withdrawals can sometimes lead to serious complications, including seizures or delirium, and should not be managed alone.

DETOX IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

Completing detox is an important achievement, but recovery doesn't end there.

Many people continue with:

- Residential treatment
- Outpatient programs
- Counselling
- Peer support groups
- Recovery coaching
- Ongoing medical care

Recovery is about building a healthier life—not just stopping substance use.

PEER PERSPECTIVE

It's normal to feel nervous about detox.

Many people worry about withdrawal, failing, or what comes next. Asking for help isn't a sign of weakness—it's a step toward giving yourself the best chance at recovery.

Recovery doesn't happen all at once. One step at a time is enough.

REMEMBER

- Detox is not treatment— it is the beginning of recovery.
- Withdrawal symptoms vary from person to person.
- Some withdrawals can be dangerous and require medical care.
- You don't have to do this alone.

Need Help Now?

If you are in crisis or need immediate assistance, please reach out.

- Call 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) or your local crisis line
- Text HOME to 741741 (in Canada) for 24/7 crisis support
- Call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department

You are stronger than you think, and help is closer than you know.

This information is for educational and peer support purposes only and is not a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. If you think you or someone else may be experiencing severe withdrawal symptoms, seek immediate medical attention.

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