

3.14 Care of people who misuse drugs and alcohol - Delirium Tremens

Clive, aged 57, drinks at least 6 cans everyday. He was in hospital recently because of a bleeding ulcer. He suffered the DTs (Delirium Tremens) whilst in hospital. He was discharged yesterday with advice to see his GP. You haven't received a discharge letter yet.

Clive: They reckoned that I'm pickling my liver. They did a scan and said that my liver is fatty.

Provide: When you drink too much your liver becomes fatty. At this point the damage is reversible if you reduce the amount of alcohol that you drink. If you carry on drinking heavily you may get hepatitis. This is when the liver becomes angry or inflamed. You may be jaundiced (yellow) and the liver struggles to do its normal jobs. (Storing energy, getting rid of toxins and poisons, protecting you from bruising and bleeding.)

Elicit: Is this news to you?

Clive: Not really. My dad died of cirrhosis. I never really understood what that meant.

Provide: If the damage from alcohol poisoning continues, you get a scarred cirrhotic liver and the liver can stop working completely. It's a dreadful way to go.

Elicit: Would you like support to stop drinking or cut back?

Clive: I'll think about it...

Provide: I'm always happy to support you, or you might want to our local team at wear-recovery. We can help you figure out how to turn things around.

What about having an alcohol free day every week? Don't stop too quickly though. Wean down your drinking to avoid the DTs.