

Prescriptions for alcohol addiction soar by 70% in the last decade

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- **Drugs included Antabuse which makes anyone sick if they drink alcohol**

By Jenny Hope

The use of drugs to treat alcohol addiction increased by 70 per cent in the past decade. Doctors last year prescribed almost £3million worth of drugs, up from £1.72million in 2003. The number of prescriptions for medication to help alcoholics quit or prevent them from relapsing went up from 102,741 in 2003 to 178,247 in 2012.



Doctors last year prescribed almost £3 million worth of drugs - up 70 per cent from £1.72m in 2003

The drugs include Antabuse, which makes anyone who takes it sick if they drink alcohol. The number of hospital admissions related to drinking also rose sharply, according to data from the Health and Social Care Information Centre for England.

Hospitals handled 200,900 admissions last year which were blamed solely on drinking, a 1 per cent rise on 2011 (198,900) and a 41 per cent rise on 2002-03 (142,000).

Men account for around two-thirds of patients needing hospital treatment for alcoholism

There were 1,220,300 hospital admissions attributed partly or wholly to drinking last year – a doubling since 2002-03, when the figure stood at 510,700. Men account for around two-thirds of those needing hospital treatment. Dr Nick Sheron, Royal College of Physicians adviser on alcohol, said: 'It is extremely important that patients who are dependent on alcohol have access to drugs that can help them recover. 'However, the rise in prescriptions of drugs to treat alcohol dependency is indicative of the huge strain alcohol abuse puts on our society.'

A Department of Health spokesman added: 'It's encouraging to see that more people are getting help for problems with alcohol. But these figures prove that alcohol is causing harm to the health of hundreds of thousands of people and we must continue to act.

That is why we are already improving prevention by funding alcohol risk assessments at GPs and encouraging increased access to alcohol liaison nurses in hospitals