

Addiction and Recovery
Near Beer Causes Relapse in Addiction Recovery
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Don't be fooled by the term "non-alcoholic beer". Most "near beers" marketed as non-alcoholic beer have alcohol in them. Most contain 0.5% alcohol. And they do cause relapse in alcoholism. This is important to know and understand as we deal with the dog days of summer and approach a traditional drinking holidays such as Labor Day.

Sometimes people in early recovery think that they cannot live with such a radical change in their lifestyle and attempt to bring back some semblance of the life they left behind. Although it is not necessarily non-therapeutic to begin to do some things sober that you used to do drinking, it can be very problematic to return to old drinking environments where the focus is the drinking.

A common example is the bar or club, where you used to hang out with your drinking buddies. When you try to return to mingling with this old group of friends, you put yourself in jeopardy of losing your recovery from the very first time that your return to the bar.

Sometimes recovering alcoholics will be lulled into a false sense of security by some initial "success" of going to the bar, drinking soda pop, and not drinking alcohol. However, for most recovering alcoholics/addicts it is only a matter of time before they take a sip of someone else's drink, order their own, or go home and drink alcohol after they leave the bar.

Sometimes recovering people believe that they can drink "near beer" because it is "non-alcoholic". Regardless of whether it has alcohol in it (which it usually does), you would be practicing to drink beer. Cues for relapse include familiar drinking places, people, feelings, smells, and tastes. Really anything could be a cue for cravings and relapse since they are based on your own unique experiences.

To maintain sobriety you must monitor, identify, and deal with each cue and trigger as they come up. The cues and triggers can lose their impact after a period of time. Early recovery is the most vulnerable to relapse. Minimizing your risk of relapse by minimizing your exposure to triggers is an appropriate thing to do.

You can avoid a lot of pain by not setting yourself up for relapse. Don't return to a lifestyle that you have outgrown in recovery. Sometimes there is a gap between letting go of an old life, and fully developing a new one. AA/NA and a recovery support system can carry you through to the next phase of your recovery and your new life.

Think of recovery as a life long process that occurs by managing the events in your life, including cues/triggers, cravings, feelings, and problems one day at a time. Don't go to the beer joints and don't drink "near beer".