Algorithm for Pharmacologic Treatment to Reduce Heavy Alcohol Use

Evaluate alcohol use, number of drinks, and motivation

On Opioids?

Yes

Alcohol withdrawal symptoms?

Yes

Topiramate or Gabapentin

No

Topiramate, Gabapentin, or Acamprosate

No

Alcohol withdrawal symptoms?

Yes

Topiramate or Gabapentin

No

Topiramate, Gabapentin, Acamprosate, or Naltrexone

Outcomes, adherence issues?

Responding and improving

Maintain on medication for at least one year

Poor or no response

Switch to a different agent

Combine agents

Adherence problem

Depot Naltrexone (if not on opioids)

Notes:
1. Gabapentin may be best for patients with high anxiety.
2. If expect adherence problems from outset, may start with depot Naltrexone (if not on opioids).