

AMBULATORY DETOX

Ambulatory Detoxification is a service that offers patients the ability to detox from alcohol or drugs as outpatients, without being confined to a hospital or clinic. Soul Surgery in Arizona is one of very few programs offering this service on the entire west coast.

In considering whether Ambulatory Detox is the right choice, it may help to understand what detoxing entails. The biological process of detoxification occurs when toxic substances, such as alcohol or narcotics, are being removed from the body. The brain uses chemical messengers called neurotransmitters to deliver messages; this ensures that day-to-day bodily functions (such as regulating appetite, sleep, focus, or motor skills) occur as normal. Addictive substances trick the brain, and the brain responds to the substance the same way it responds to neurotransmitters. Then, the brain's balance shifts, and it begins relying on the addictive substance just to function normally. So when someone quits using the addictive substance in question—particularly if they quit “cold turkey”—the brain becomes confused, and withdrawal symptoms like tremors, anxiety, nausea, or hypertension occur. The goal of detoxification is to return the body to homeostasis—a person's healthy, stable state of being.

Detox programs like those offered by Soul Surgery in Scottsdale, Arizona, can provide support and relief for patients as they detoxify.

There are several factors in determining whether a patient is a good candidate for Ambulatory Detox. According to the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), there are **six criteria** used to determine a patient's placement: acute intoxication and/or withdrawal potential; biomedical conditions and complications; emotional, behavioral, or cognitive conditions and complications; readiness to change; relapse, continued use, or continued problem potential; and recovery/living environment. After assessing these aspects of a patient's recovery needs, it can be determined what kind of treatment would be most appropriate, whether intensive inpatient services, resident inpatient services, or outpatient services—and within outpatient services, with or without extended onsite monitoring.

One of the most important factors in deciding whether to pursue Ambulatory Detox is the severity of the patient's withdrawal symptoms: if symptoms are mild to moderate, and non-dangerous, Ambulatory Detox may be a good choice. Patients should also have a good support structure of family and/or friends in place who can be trusted to help monitor the patient's progress. This form of detox should happen in conjunction with other treatments as well, including but not limited to psychotherapy, counseling, and/or Medication-Assisted Treatment. With alcohol dependence, for example, long-acting benzodiazepines are generally given on a fixed schedule, in concurrence with other treatments.

Ambulatory Detox can be offered with or without extended onsite monitoring. Even with mild withdrawal symptoms, it is important that medical personnel are able to observe a patient's progress and behavior, whether inpatient or out, in case of worsening withdrawal symptoms or danger or relapse. With extended onsite monitoring, patients go onsite for several hours per day over the course of their treatment to be monitored by nurses or physicians. Without extended onsite monitoring, nurses or physicians monitor patients according to a predetermined schedule—so the patient is still being monitored by professionals, but less frequently.

If the patient's support networks are in place, Ambulatory Detox offers many appealing characteristics. Patients can maintain more flexibility with Ambulatory Detox than with inpatient care. Patients can often continue going to work as normal, as well as spending time with their family or loved ones. The cost of Ambulatory Detox is also lower than that of inpatient services. For patients with a strong support network and non-severe withdrawal symptoms, Ambulatory Detox may be a very good option.

While detoxification is one of the first steps in the recovery process, it is not adequate standalone treatment for alcohol or drug rehabilitation. After detoxification, patients should engage in a formal rehabilitation program, such as a twelve-step program, to achieve long term, successful recovery.

Soul Surgery in Scottsdale, Arizona offers these services, along with many others.