

Alcohol Related Disorders

Introduction:

Alcohol-related disorders are conditions that develop as a result of excessive and prolonged consumption of alcohol. Alcoholism may gradually affect a number of organs in the body. The condition usually arises after many years of consuming alcohol. Alcohol related disorders can be grouped as alcohol induced disorders (such as alcohol intoxication), alcohol dependence and alcohol misuse.

Severe consumption of alcohol can lead to a number of disorders such as liver disorders (liver cirrhosis and fatty liver), high blood pressure, gastrointestinal disorders (gastritis and stomach/duodenal ulcer), psychological problems such as depression and anxiety since alcohol acts as a CNS depressant, damage to an unborn baby in pregnant women, sexual dysfunction in both men and women, insomnia, obesity and alcohol dependence. In addition, long-standing alcoholism may also cause pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas), cardiovascular problems, damage to the nerves, cancer, brain degeneration, early menopause in women, Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome (a brain disorder that results in loss of specific brain functions), decrease bone density, etc.

Signs and Symptoms:

The various signs and symptoms include nervousness, tremors, increase in blood pressure and heart rate, weight loss, loss of appetite, excessive sweating, mood swings, depression and seizures (convulsions).

Diagnosis:

Diagnosis for alcohol related disorders is generally made based on information given either by the individual or the family, detailed physical

examination to identify physical problems related to alcohol use. Laboratory tests such as blood tests to check for blood alcohol level, liver function tests to evaluate functioning of the liver and imaging techniques such as CT scan and MRI scan.

Treatment:

The treatment for alcohol related disorders mainly depends on treating the underlying conditions. In addition, treatment options include detoxification and withdrawal from alcohol under controlled, supervised setting usually for about 4 to 7 days. This may require a stay in a specialized facility in addition to close medical supervision.

Alcohol recovery or rehabilitation programs can help people stay off alcohol. These programs usually offer counselling, psychological support, nursing and medical care. Therapy involves education about alcoholism and its effects.

Medications may be given to curb a physical craving for alcohol.

Individual or family counselling since alcoholism may co-exist with mental illness, including depression.

Mutual help groups such as support groups. Individuals in these groups support each other by sharing personal experiences and advice.

More Information:

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