

LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES OF EXCESSIVE DRINKING

Family Consequences

* finances needed for basics spent on drinking *child neglect (physical/emotional) *child abuse (physical/sexual) *lack of trust in each other *climate of isolation, embarrassment, fear develops *family breakdown due to separation/divorce

Financial Costs

* purchase of alcohol *court fines due to alcohol-related offences *car repairs, property damage, increased insurance *medical costs not covered by OHIP *other transportation costs *loss of wages due to lost time, suspensions, termination *other costs due to forgetfulness, neglect of self and responsibilities

Legal consequences

*criminal record due to alcohol-related convictions *fines, jail, probation with various conditions, loss of driver's licence and other personal freedoms

Work Problems

*poor performance and relationship problems *lateness/absenteeism *higher risk of accidents due to impairment/withdrawal *suspensions with/without pay *termination of employment

Health Problems

*headaches *sleep problems *depression *blackouts *faintness/dizziness *hang-over *seizures *loss of appetite/taste *bleeding gums *nausea *indigestion/gas *stomach pain *vomiting *ulcer *muscle weakness *cramps/diarrhea/constipation *excessive tiredness *rash/dermatitis *high blood pressure *shakiness

PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES OF EXCESSIVE DRINKING

Alcohol is a toxic substance and thus can have the following severe and widespread consequences for the body. A number of these conditions can result from other causes, but also result from alcohol abuse.

Stomach	Alcohol requires no digestion and most of it is absorbed in the small intestine, although some is absorbed directly through the stomach. Alcohol stimulates the secretion of hydrochloric acid to the stomach. This can cause gastritis with symptoms including heartburn, excessive gas, bloating of stomach, nausea vomiting, poor appetite, weight loss, "the dry heaves" and stomach pain. Heavy alcohol use can lead to stomach and duodenal ulcers, which can bleed, perforate the stomach lining and cause obstructions in the digestive system.
Pancreas	Inflammation of the pancreas is know as pancreatitis which is a very serious problem and is often fatal. Severe abdominal pain is the outstanding symptom and the pain is usually steady and bores through to the back or appears in the chest. Pancreatitis can lead to the development of diabetes. Statistics indicate that 40% of people with pancreatitis are alcoholics.
Liver	<p>When discussing the liver, there is "bad news" and "good news". The bad news is that we cannot live without a liver. The good news is that it is larger than it has to be to do its job. The liver is responsible for neutralizing, or breaking down, almost all the toxic and harmful substances in the body. It is the body's factory and 90% of alcohol in the body is broken down by the liver into acetaldehyde.</p> <p>One of the early changes produced by excessive intake of alcohol results in a fatty liver. With an increase in the amount of fat in the liver, there is liver enlargement and chemical changes, a fore-runner of cirrhosis. Abstinence of alcohol reverses this condition. When alcohol is in the body, the liver is forced to spend its time and energy getting rid of it, so its normal nutritional chores go unattended. As a result, the manufacturing of proteins, carbohydrates, and fats slows down. The production of bile salts also decreases, resulting in a lowered ability to absorb fats, which in turn leads to diarrhea and poor absorption of fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K). As a result the liver swells, hardens, calcifies, aka cirrhosis.</p>
Small Intestine	Excessive drinking causes damage to the lining cells and the cilia, which borders them. This leads to poor absorption of nutrients as well as a tendency towards diarrhea and a loss of nutrients in the urine.
Large intestine	Alcohol can either speed up or slow down the emptying rate of the large (and small) intestines. Speeding it up causes diarrhea and a loss of valuable nutrients; slowing it down causes constipation, retaining the toxins for reabsorption.
Alcohol Hepatitis	An inflammation process which involves loss of liver tissue. The liver becomes enlarged, firm and often tender. Jaundice can result as can swelling of the abdomen and legs. Some people recover but for others it can lead to fatal complications.
Alcoholic Cirrhosis	Alcohol abuse is the major cause of cirrhosis and 10% of alcoholics develop it. It is a disease in which the structure of the liver is destroyed by fibrous scars, which impair the vital function of the liver. The scar tissue surrounds the living liver cells and interferes with the flow of blood to and from these cells. The toxic compounds not processed by the liver impair the brain and other organs. Cirrhosis leads to complications including loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, bloating of the abdomen, loss of sex drive, internal bleeding, easy bruising, anaemia, fragile bones and kidney failure. It can be fatal and is irreversible.

Esophagus	<p>The esophagus is the tube which takes food from the throat to the stomach. Those who drink excessively can develop varicose veins of the esophagus. When the liver becomes damaged, the blood flow becomes restricted which puts a back pressure on the veins in the esophagus. As a result, the veins become stretched, and twisted, and may bulge and sometimes burst. This condition can be fatal because of massive haemorrhaging.</p> <p>Another condition can result in the esophagus from repeated and prolonged vomiting and retching. Tears can develop in the lining of the esophagus and these tears can be severe and cause massive bleeding which can be fatal.</p>
Lungs	<p>Alcoholics and those who drink excessively are susceptible to infections. Heavy drinkers also tend to be heavy smokers, which can lead to respiratory conditions including obstructive lung disease, pneumonia, pleurisy, bronchitis, emphysema, and pulmonary tuberculosis.</p>
Brain	<p>Varying degrees of damage can occur here depending on the part of the brain that is effected. There is a relationship between prolonged intake of alcohol and a degeneration or withering away of the part of the brain known as the cerebellum. People suffering from the type of brain damage have difficulty walking without staggering. They pronounce their words poorly and can be very awkward with their hands and arms as well. There is no specific treatment for this condition.</p> <p>Intake of alcohol can cause a progressive course of damage resulting in memory difficulties (blackouts), impaired judgement, fluctuation in emotions, shallowness of affect and alterations in intellectual functions, including calculation, comprehension and new leanings. More serious damage can occur resulting in early symptoms of fatigue, listlessness and loss of interest, depression, anxiety, and personality changes such as irritability, social withdrawal and lack of consideration for others. In later stages, there may be confusion, loss of memory for recent events, and general forgetfulness with generally poor judgement.</p>
The Heart	<p>The strength of the heart muscle is effected by alcohol. Heavy drinkers can develop an enlarged, swollen and weak heart which cannot keep up with it duties of supplying blood to the body. Palpitations and fatigue often occur. Heart failure can result. Also because of the use of alcohol, irregularities of the heart, disturbance in the heart beat and blood clots may occur. High blood pressure is more common in alcoholics than in the general population.</p>
Peripheral Neuritis	<p>This condition develops slowly, taking from weeks to months to develop. It is probably due to nutritional deficiencies, in particular those of the B vitamins. Damage is seen in peripheral nerves in the hands and feet which results in numbness, burning, tingling, or prickling sensations in extremities, usually the feet first (sensory neuritis). If this condition develops further, there is muscle weakness and wasting (motor neuritis).</p>
Fetal Alcohol Syndrome	<p>It has now been determined that problems with growth definition in babies can be related to alcohol consumption during pregnancy. This condition was once thought to only be found in babies born to chronic alcoholic woman. However, it has recently been determined that moderate alcohol consumption can predispose the baby to certain problems, and as yet no safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy has been identified.</p>
Trauma and Injury	<p>The alcoholic or excessive drinker is prone to accidents and injuries resulting in physical complications. Heavy drinking can be correlated with such things as automobile accidents, falling down stairs, and "slipping" in the shower or tub.</p>
Withdrawal	<p>Alcohol is an addiction substance and the body will get used to having a certain amount in its system. When alcohol intake is stopped, the body reacts to the abstinence. This is know as withdrawal. Symptoms of withdrawal vary from anxiety, irritability, sleeplessness, lack of appetite, sweating, vomiting, shaking and seizures, to "DTs" or delirium tremors marked by hallucinations, agitation, disorientation and marked confusion.</p>

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