

## Overview

Alcoholism is a progressive, chronic, and often fatal disease. It is viewed as a primary disorder and not as what the majority believes a symptom of other diseases or emotional problems. The chemistry or components of alcohol allows it to affect almost all types of cell in the body, these includes the cells in the central nervous system. Study shows that after long exposure to alcohol, the human brain adapts to the changes that alcohol makes and becomes dependent on it. The severity or impact of this disease is influenced by factors such as psychology, genetics, culture, and response to physical pain.

Signs of alcoholism or alcohol dependence include the following:

- The only indication of early alcoholism may be the unpleasant physical responses to withdrawal that occur during even brief periods of abstinence.
- People considered as alcoholics have a very little or almost no control over the quantity they drink or frequency or duration of their drinking.
- These people are preoccupied with drinking, they are denying their own addiction, and they continue to drink even though they are fully aware of the dangers.
- Some people in the course of time become tolerant to the effects of drinking and soon they will require more alcohol to become intoxicated, thus creating the illusion that they can "hold their liquor."
- These people tend to have blackouts after drinking, and due frequent hangovers they tend to miss work and other normal activities.

- Alcoholics tend to drink alone and they have a tendency to start drinking early in the day.
- They periodically quit drinking and switch from beer to hard liquor or wine, but these periods rarely last.
- For severe alcoholics it is common for them to have a history of accidents, marital and work instability, as well as other alcohol-related health problems.
- They will also have episodes of violence as well as abusive incidents which involves their spouses and children, they also have a history of frequent or unexplained accidents brought about by their dependence in alcohol.

History shows that people have been drinking alcohol for perhaps 15,000 years.

Consistent and drinking steadily over time has a tendency to cause dependence, this also causes withdrawal symptoms during periods of abstinence; bear in mind however that this physical dependence, is not the only cause of alcoholism. Factors such as genetics, biology, culture and psychology are also some factors why alcoholism develops.

### **Factors that leads to Alcoholism**

*Genetic factors* this factor plays a very significant role in alcoholism , this may account for about half of the total risk for alcoholism, due to its complexity however , it is very unlikely that any single gene will ever be identified as a major culprit as the sole cause of alcoholism.

*Social and Cultural Pressures.* Due to advertising and promotions we are made to believe that drinking is pleasurable. Also media is publicizing the health benefits of

moderate drinking thus giving the ex-drinkers the spurious excuse of returning to alcohol for their health. We as individuals should use our better judgment and analyze whether is messages are just an industry's attempt to profit from potentially great harm to individuals.

***Mental and Emotional Stress.*** Alcohol is perceived to be a loyal friend when human relationships fail, this is due to the fact that it has the tendency to block out emotional pain. It is also being associated with freedom since it offsets the boredom of daily routines. The brain seeks to restore what it perceives to be its equilibrium when the alcoholic tries to quit drinking. And almost always the brain's best weapons to achieve this are anxiety depression, and stress (which is the emotional equivalent of physical pain), these feelings are usually produced by brain chemical imbalances. And unfortunately these negative moods will continue to tempt alcoholics in returning to drinking even long after physical withdrawal symptoms have abated.

***Depression and Anxiety.*** People that has a very high tendency to be alcoholic are those severely depressed or anxious people. And one 2000 study shows that, the risk for heavy drinking in the female species who are depressed was 2.6 times greater than the risk in women who are not depressed. Anxiety and anxiety really plays a major role in the development of alcoholism in the older bracket, these people are often subject to dramatic life changes examples to these changes are retirement, the death or loss of a spouse or friends, and the medical and health problems. Drinking problems in these cases is brought about by self medication may be due to anxiety or depression. Major depression, in fact, accompanies about one-third of all cases of alcoholism.

***How it affects and why is it an issue in our society :***

Excessive and heavy consumption of alcohol can have a very severe impact on the brain, both on the long term and short term basis. The alcoholics aggressive behavior can be brought about by effects that alcohol has on various parts of the brain. First, alcohol can affect the gamma-aminobutyric acid receptor (GABA-A) complex in the brain this causes the aggressive behavior by creating anxiety over socially inappropriate behavior. Second, the effect of alcohol on the dopaminergic system, this system controls the psychomotor stimulation and when this is affected it leads to the increase in the intensity and level of aggression. It also lowers the blood sugar and study shows that a low blood sugar in the brain contributes to a heightened level of aggression (Graham, Wells, & West, 1997, p. 626). Also alcoholics use aggression to over react to situations they find unpleasant. And with excessive alcohol, use they tend to lose capacity to exhibit selfcontrol over their emotions and feelings. And these people use alcohol as a reason to unleash their pent up emotions or negative feelings. And for some alcoholics they use alcohol as a way of burying negative feelings of guilt and depression. And as Graham, Wells, and West has shown the general state of mind of an alcoholic is usually moody and hostile, and it leads leading to increased chances of violent and aggressive behavior at the slightest provocation. Alcohol also affects the individuals' ability to function very effectively. Drunken alcoholics do not care about their surroundings. They are behaving improperly without even being aware of their actions that they have done. On the other hand, because they are only conscious of obvious externalized social cues, they are likely to be ultra-sensitive in their reactions to the situation. Because they are deprived of their ability to think clearly and deeply, the people under the influence of alcohol, no longer realize that they can behave in an alternative way. What is even more

dangerous is that drunken people has a tendency to show off , they have a feeling and belief that they are very powerful which usually is not the case. And due to this feeling they deliberately provoke others or misinterpret others' behavior as a challenge to their supremacy (Graham, Wells, & West, 1997, ). Alcoholic parents on the other hand have a negative effect on their children , this is because of the fact that alcohol undermines their capacity to use their parenting skills. First, heavy or excessive drinking by the parents usually lead to inconsistent parenting behavior. And when thierchild misbehaves in certain way, the parent may overreact by screaming the child this time, while ignoring the same offense in the future. And due to this , the child receives mixed signals and gets confused .Parenting behaviors inconsistency creates a very unstable and unpredictable and environment which can cause and effect in the child's mental and emotional growth (Windle, 1996,). A study on the effects of alcohol on parents' found that alcoholic parents are unable to respond appropriately to a child's improper behavior. It shows that even if the child acts improperly, alcoholic parents not only fail to discipline the child, but engage in parental indulgences that are inappropriate for the occasion (Lang, Pelham, Atkeson, & Murphy, 1999,). From the discussion above, it is very evident that alcoholism can have a very long-lasting physiological and social impact. These group of people places themselves at a very high risk for various accidents and their capacities to function effectively in daily life and in performing their jobs is impaired. alcoholism also threatens the welfare of families for it destroys the relationships between loved ones. What is worst of all, the children who grow up in such a dysfunctional environment will likely grow up to be very much like their parents and will also be imposing their way on their children, this actions will trigger a never-ending cycle of alcohol abuse, thus people who

are very much addicted to alcohol needs to abstain from alcohol and they should seek help before they and their families are destroyed.

*Actions being taken to correct the issue:*

**Treatment**

Like in most addictions most alcoholics and alcohol abusers enter treatment reluctantly why? because they deny that they have a problem. Most of the time they must be pressured. What prompts their treatment is either health or legal problems. Personal intervention will definitely help an alcoholic recognize that there is a problem thus accept the need for treatment. And people concerned with a friend or family member, should be discussing intervention with a professional. A present a wide range of treatments is very much available to help people with alcohol problems and each treatment is tailor made for individuals. Treatments may involve an evaluation, a brief intervention, an outpatient program or counseling, or a residential inpatient stay. Usually the first step in the treatment is, accepting the problem and admitting that you are an alcoholic. If you still haven't lost control over your use of alcohol, your treatment will involve the reduction of your drinking. Cutting back is ineffective and inappropriate. If you have alcoholism, and a part that must be present in your treatment goal is abstinence. However, if you are still not dependent on alcohol but you are experiencing the adverse effects of drinking, you should focus the goal of your treatment to reduce alcohol-related problems, this is often achieved by counseling or brief intervention. A brief intervention usually involves alcohol-abuse specialists who can establish a specific treatment plan. Goal setting, use of self help manuals, behavioral modification techniques, counseling

and follow-up care at a treatment center. is some of the forms of intervention .In the United States the most common residential alcoholism treatment program are based on the Minnesota model. This approach includes individual and group therapy, Abstinence, family involvement, work assignments , participation in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), educational lectures, activity therapy and the use of counselors — many of whom are recovering alcoholics — and multiprofessional staff.

### **Prevention**

One of the important step towards seeking treatment to this problem is to know and recognize the family history of alcoholism. Early intervention is particularly important for teenagers. Although for many adults it may take years before they develop alcohol dependence, the young group or the teenagers become addicted more quickly. And the use of alcohol is very high during the high school years. Every year in the United States, thousands of teenagers dies or gets disabled due to alcohol-related automobile accidents. It is also is often the cause in other teenage deaths, this includes suicide, drowning fires. For the young people, the likelihood of addiction to alcohol dependent on the influence of parents, peers and other role models, they will also be very susceptible to advertising.

### **Complementary and Alternative Medicine**

In addition to residential treatment, many other approaches to alcoholism may help, including:

- Acupuncture. – is the insertion of hair-thin needles under your skin, this may relieve cravings for alcohol. And It may also reduce depression and anxiety.

- Biofeedback. It is a method of relieving symptoms of stress by relaxing your muscles. This will involve the monitoring of one of your physiologic systems — heart, respiration, skin resistance or temperature change — with this method you can become more aware of your body's stress and thus control it. Once you learn biofeedback techniques.
- Motivational enhancement therapy. In this treatment a therapist helps you to acknowledge that you have a problem and may guide you through stages to help you change your behavior.
- Cognitive behavior therapy. This is the method used by therapist to identify distorted thoughts and beliefs that arouse psychological stress. You will be taught and will learn ways on how you can view and cope with traumatic events differently, and you learn alternative beliefs about the events and the impacts they have on your life. Special emphasis is placed on learning to develop a sense of mastery and control of your thoughts and feelings.

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