

Effect of Alcoholism

Introduction:

Alcoholism is a condition in which an individual becomes dependent on alcohol. Dependence on alcohol interferes with the individual's day to day activities along with his personal and professional life. Alcoholism has deleterious effects on one's overall health. Organs such as the brain, liver, heart, kidneys and stomach are most affected. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy causes damage to the brain of the unborn child.

Signs and Symptoms:

Alcoholism or too much dependence on alcohol causes some short and long term effects. Short term symptoms include drowsiness, vomiting, slurred speech, stomach cramps, gastritis, headache, blurred vision, problems in maintaining coordination, blackouts, anaemia or loss of oxygen supply to the body.

Long-term signs and symptoms include drunken driving causing accidents, domestic violence, alcohol poisoning, high blood pressure, stroke, liver diseases, sexual problems, brain damage, ulcerations in the stomach, cancer of the gut and throat.

Diagnosis:

The diagnosis of the effects of alcoholism requires a thorough insight to the individual's history. The physician asks a series of questions to the individual as a means to diagnose. The American Psychiatric Association has published some criterias in order to diagnose an individual with alcoholism such as:

Tolerance- depends on the amount of alcohol required by the individual to feel intoxicated.

Withdrawal symptoms- symptoms arising after abruptly stopping alcohol such

as nausea, anxiety and vomiting.

Persistent desire to drink alcohol.

Abstaining from other activities for drinking.

Continued use of alcohol even after facing problems.

In order to be diagnosed as an alcoholic, the individual should aptly fit in the above criterias.

Treatment:

Treatment for alcoholism includes:

Detoxification and withdrawal- the treatment begins with detoxification programme for a period of four or seven days. Certain medications are prescribed to curb the withdrawal symptoms such as headache, sleeplessness, etc. Psychological counseling of the individual and family for their support. Talk therapy also known as psychotherapy can also help to treat the condition.

Complications/Side Effects:

Long term drinking of alcohol causes certain complications such as alcohol hepatitis (inflammation of the liver), liver cirrhosis (scarring or fat deposition in the liver causing irreversible damage to the liver), gastritis (inflammation of the lining of the stomach), damage to the pancreas, heart attacks or strokes, erectile dysfunction in men and menstrual problems in women, osteoporosis (alcohol interferes with production of bone cells causing weakening of the bones and fractures), neurological complications such as short term memory loss and numbness of the hands and feet, increased risk of cancer of the mouth, stomach, breast, kidneys, etc.

More Information:

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