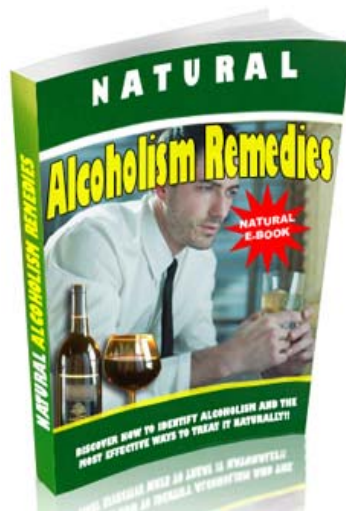


Natural Alcoholism Remedies



By

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Introduction

Alcoholism is something that cannot be defined in simple terms. Alcoholism in general refers to the condition whereby there is a compulsion in man to keep consuming beverages with alcohol content which is harmful to health. The condition of alcoholism does not allow the person addicted to have any control over consumption in spite of being aware of the negative consequences resulting from it.

Even if the person who is an alcoholic faces social ridicule, family pressure, abuses, insults, etc he is in a condition whereby he cannot give up the habit or obsession which is beyond his control. His senses are totally under the influence of alcohol and any kind of an effort put forth by him to give up the habit does not work. He is thus totally dependent on the beverage.

An alcoholic has such a craving to drink that even if he happens to get into alcohol related trouble like drunken driving, losing his job, etc it does not stop him from considering giving up the habit.

Not everyone who consumes alcohol is an alcoholic. A person who consumes alcohol in limited quantities and is able to say no when he does not want to is not termed an alcoholic. He or she is just a social drinker.

One interesting theory proposed by writers is that alcohol in early days was discovered to replace the scarcity of unpolluted and safe drinking water. People preferred to die a slow death rather than dying overnight after drinking the extremely polluted and harmful water which carried many bacteria's, viruses and diseases.

Alcohol abuse

Alcohol abuse refers to the condition when a person who is under the influence of the beverage refuses to stop the undesirable practice in spite of facing problems repeatedly. Problems could be social, legal or personal. Damage caused from this could be both at the physical and mental level.

People who are under influence of alcohol generally do not bother about the condition or situation when they consume the beverage i.e. they do not bother to

stay away from drinks even if they have to necessarily drive. Due to this they are at a risk of getting into trouble with the law.

Personal problems may arise due to intolerance of family members towards the attitude of irresponsibility which invariably arises out of this condition. Personal relationships get affected and life becomes filled with tension, stress and complexes.

Social problems may include misbehaviour in public causing embarrassment to oneself, one's family or friends who are around. People under the influence of alcohol generally tend to get loud and boisterous, or may become sober and melancholic. Their gait is also imbalanced and more often than not, they stagger and sometimes even fall down. They may even, without being conscious about it, abuse people around causing unpleasantness.

Alcohol dependence

Alcohol dependence can be defined as a condition wherein the person who is dependent exhibits certain other characteristics apart from those of alcohol abuse.

These include starting to drink only one particular brand of beverage, seeking to go to places where drinks are available, looking for the company of people who are drinkers, constant increase in alcohol tolerance level which means requiring more and more drinks in order to achieve that state of intoxication, going through noticeable withdrawal symptoms at the physical level after a certain period of time without drinks, drinking again to put an end to withdrawal symptoms, not being able to stay away from drinks even after repeatedly trying to give up, etc.

It is easier to treat or help people who are just alcohol abusers in contrast to those who are alcohol dependent. Alcohol abusers can sometimes be treated even by counselling and educating them on the dangers of drinking.

Alcohol dependents have to necessarily take help from the treatment clinics where they undergo detoxification, medical treatment, constant counselling, etc.

According to scientists, the condition of alcohol dependence can arise due to complex genetic disorders or due to environmental factors which include influence of family members or friends.

Symptoms

You can recognize a person who has been drinking severely with various symptoms he exhibits. These symptoms increase over a period of time. Early signs if left unattended may lead to alcohol abuse and eventually to alcohol dependence.

Drunkenness is the state a person reaches when he is intoxicated. Intoxication is achieved by consuming alcohol to the extent that it impairs the physical and mental faculties of a person.

Symptoms as seen earlier includes imbalance in the gait, poor or no coordination, slurring of speech, reddening of the eyes, flushed look on the face, frequent hiccups, becoming unaware of surroundings and therefore uninhibited and behaviour which is not characteristic of the person. This in turn creates a lot of tension for the family and friends of the person concerned.

The person who is drunk also exhibits swinging emotions. While he is angry one moment he becomes sad and reflective the next. Depression swings to euphoria in a short span of time. He is depressed and contemplative one moment and jovial, exuberant and light hearted the next.

Hangover the next day is another condition whereby the drinker may suffer from acute headaches, nausea, vomiting and is very uncomfortable. In order to get over these symptoms, some drinkers take another drink early in the morning.

Drunkenness or intoxication is not a disease but only a temporary state resulting from excessive alcohol consumption. This state exists only until the effect of alcohol in the system is prevalent. It is a type of a disorder of the mind occurring due to certain chemical reactions in the brain of the intoxicated person. The person is not actually out of touch with what is real even though he may be disoriented.

Types of problems related to alcoholism

Binge Drinking – The habit of drinking prevalent among mostly young people in the age group of 18 to 21 is called Binge drinking. This kind of drinking is mostly prevalent among college students. Binge drinking is a condition where men take upto four or five drinks in one session and women take a minimum of three drinks per session.

Students who indulge in binge drinking get into drinking related troubles often like injury due to accidents, misbehaviour with higher authorities, missing classes, hangovers, etc.

Early signs which have to be heeded are heavy drinking even while driving and other high risk situations, drinking until a person blacks out or loses his consciousness, marked behavioural changes like uncontrollable anger erupting violently, etc.

From exhibiting these early symptoms, the drinker progresses on to the stage of alcohol abuse whereby he gets into trouble at work, with the law and at home frequently and yet does not stop his excessive drinking.

The next progressive level is when the drinker becomes an alcoholic or alcohol dependent whereby he or she experiences extreme symptoms with loss of control over alcohol related craving and severe withdrawal symptoms.

Identifying the problem

Honesty –

Being honest is the first prerequisite for diagnosing alcohol related problems if any. The drinker has to be honest in his answers when he is being questioned about his feelings, pattern of drinking, thought process, etc.

This is very important as the first thing any drinker will tend to do is to deny any kind of a problem. They tend to put in every effort to convince the person who is questioning them that they do not have any problem which requires treatment. All drinkers resist treatment.

If it is not possible to make the drinker honest with his answers it is very difficult to diagnose the level of problem accurately and start the treatment.

Role of doctors –

Doctors play a very minor role in diagnosing alcohol related problems. They do not recognize the symptoms most of the times and even if they do, they are reluctant to

question their patients about it. This is because, habits are something personal and it does not do well as a social etiquette to question a person about them until the patient himself talks about it.

Most of the doctors when asked about this feel, more than the etiquette point of view, they are not confident in dealing with alcohol abuse related problems in a patient even if they do diagnose the same with the help of symptoms.

According to them, this is because they are not properly equipped with knowledge of how to deal with alcoholics. A lot of efforts are being made to provide training in this field for medical and health care professionals.

Role of family members –

Family plays an important role in diagnosing drinking problems if any. It is very easy for the family members to recognize alcoholism in a person with various symptoms. The first symptom is the drinker denying any kind of a problem when confronted by his spouse or children or other family members.

When they vehemently deny and go on the defensive, it is a sure sign of serious alcoholism. The person has to be convinced to go in for treatment before the situation worsens.

When a person persistently drinks in spite of the various social, emotional, physical and mental problems caused by the habit, it shows he is getting addicted to the habit and needs to at least go in for counselling as a first step. One thing we have to remember is unless the drinker himself is ready for help, family members should not try to force them into anything as this will definitely lead to more problems.

A person who is going through alcohol abuse tends to blame everything and everyone around him for all the mishaps happening due to his drinking problem. He or she generally goes on the defensive and tries more and more to prove that everything other than his drinking is the reason for any untoward happenings.

In such a situation if any of the family members try and force their views on him he is bound to get excited, abusive and sometimes even violent. He or she may even start drinking more because of this.

The best thing family members can do in such a case is to join any of the closest Alcoholics Anonymous groups or even one of the online support groups to get ideas and tips on how to deal with the drinker effectively. These groups help family members identify anything that they may be doing wrong in dealing with the drinker. They try and identify unhealthy roles played by the family members subconsciously which might be aiding in worsening of alcoholism in the person concerned.

If the alcoholic himself is willing to go in for professional help when he reaches the extreme and things become painful, either physically or mentally, then it is easy to start the treatment and rehabilitation process.

Alternately, professional help and intervention may be sought by the family members in case of any critical health problems arising out of alcohol dependence. Even in such a case there may be severe opposition from the drinker causing problems and friction in the family.

Organizations like Alcoholics Anonymous or the Alcoholic online support groups provide mental strength and guidance to family members by effectively training them on how to remain detached from problems arising out of alcoholism afflicted member even while providing support and encouragement to him.

Intervention –

More often than not, forcible intervention does not help in any way in bringing the person in question for treatment or help. In fact if your intervention method is confrontational, it definitely has a negative impact on the person and puts him off from the idea of going in for help.

Moreover, doing this may make the person quite unpleasant and painful thereby putting the family under more stress and strain than what they already are in. This is one of the reasons why even professionals do not go in for interventions.

In rare cases, the intervention may be successful and the patient may agree for treatment. In most of the cases though, the person in question gets angry, abusive and violent leaving the family and interveners in the lurch. Even threats of divorce or separation from children are not heeded by the alcoholic.

Intervention therefore does not offer any kind of a guarantee or certainty. Sometimes, out of pressure the person may agree for treatment and may even

abstain from drinking for some time. There is nothing that can be done if they eventually go back to their habit.

If you are considering going in for professional intervention to help your family member, you must make sure the person you choose is well qualified and certified. This ensures that the procedure is effective and successful.

Diagnostic methods and screening tests –

There are various diagnostic and screening methods available to identify and treat alcoholism. In order to deal with the common problem of denial, these methods usually ask questions related to problems arising out of this habit rather than the amount consumed. These screenings are done at various primary health care centres and urgent care centres.

Initially, during the first few sittings, the person with the problem is not asked more than three to four questions whereby he becomes comfortable with the process. Later on, in depth questioning and assessment starts where the alcoholic is evaluated extensively to identify the level of problem that exists.

One method is to evaluate yourself using your common sense. If you feel you have to find out if you are on your way to becoming alcohol dependent it shows that you have a problem. In spite of repeated attempts to quit drinking, if you find yourself not able to, it means you need help as this indicates that alcohol has taken control over your mind and life.

Self reports in the form of questionnaires are a common method to determine how severe the problem is. One of the popular questionnaires is the CAGE questionnaire which involves just four questions related to whether the drinker ever felt the need to **C**ut down on his drinking, whether he gets **A**nnoyed with people nagging him, whether he feels **G**uilty about his habit and whether as an **E**ye opener, he feels he needs a drink early in the morning to handle the hangover.

If any two of the answers is YES, then the patient is prepared for further evaluation. Apart from the CAGE questionnaire, there are a few others which are popular for assessment of alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence.

One such questionnaire is the Alcohol Dependence Data Questionnaire. This test is more extensive and identifies the level and extent of alcohol dependence and heavy use of alcohol.

Another questionnaire used is the Michigan Alcohol Screening Test or MAST which is used in courts while dealing with alcohol related cases mostly drunken driving. One of the screening tests which has been developed by the World Health Organisation is the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test or AUDIT. This test is extensively used all over the world and is as popular as the CAGE test.

Genes and Alcoholism

According to psychiatrists, genes play an important role in the development of alcoholism. Certain body and brain processes and the way they interact with each other and with the person's experiences in life determine his vulnerability towards this habit or protection from it. Certain genes related to alcoholism have also been identified.

Extensive research has shown that a variation of the dopamine receptor genes in humans creates a tendency towards opiates and endorphin releasing drugs and alcohol.

Gamma-aminobutyric acid or GABA is another inhibitory neurotransmitter in the brain said to be associated with alcoholism. Studies have shown that a certain enzyme called glutamate decarboxylase or GAD plays a major role as a synthesizer of this GABA.

GABA plays the role of reducing the excitement causing neuro activities in the brain thereby giving a stable and sedate feeling. Alcohol consumption has shown to increase the level of GABA providing a sedate and numb feeling to the drinker.

As one starts consuming alcohol more and more, the counter mechanism that sets in reduces the GABA production thereby forcing the drinker to increase his alcohol consumption. According to researchers, genetic background plays a major role in instigating a person towards alcoholism. This happens when there is a creation of physical and psychological memories in a person creating a craving for alcohol in the body.

Research is being done on an extensive basis to determine the extent or role played by GABA in making a person alcohol dependent. As of now there is no conclusive explanation for this theory.

Alcohol content detection tests

Breathalyzer

Breathalyzer is one of the most commonly used tests to find out the level of alcohol content in the body. This test involves the analysis of a person's breath. There are a variety of companies making this machine which is used for breath analysis.

Though used as a preliminary stage of analysis, especially by the police for determining drunken driving, this test is not very reliable and accurate. Breathalyzers use basic computers which aid in the calculation of the level of alcohol in the blood of the person in question. This is done with the assumption that all persons are average with no distinction between a male and a female in spite of the fact that there is a great difference in the alcohol related metabolism between a man and a woman.

Another disadvantage is that breathalyzers do not actually measure the content of alcohol in the breath. What they do is to use a technology called infrared spectroscopy to see if something called a "methyl group" is present in the breath. The fact is that this "methyl group" is not exclusive to alcohol. It can be present in the breath of a person even if he is a diabetic or even if he is on a diet. Vapours of thinners, paints, glue, gasoline, etc if inhaled also show presence of "methyl group" like acetone.

Self testing

This test involves measuring the content of alcohol in the breath of a person to determine the level in the blood. There is a simple device which can be used by the person himself. These devices, when used in the proper manner can provide very accurate estimate of alcohol level in the blood.

As soon as alcohol is consumed the content level increases rapidly in the blood, spreads throughout the body and reaches the brain. This is because of the fact that in contrast to food, alcohol penetrates the wall of the stomach and enters the blood stream almost immediately.

Level of alcohol is at its peak one hour after drinking. Self testing breath analyzing kits can be purchased from shops and from various sites on the internet. The device is actually a tube made of glass. This tube has crystals which have to be exposed to breath as a testing process. The crystal changes colour according to the alcohol concentration in the breath. This is the simple manual device.

The electronic meter has a digital reading display which shows the level of alcohol content after the person blows into the glass mouthpiece attached to it. These devices are mostly used to keep tabs on people who are on rehabilitation programs.

Self analysis with the help of these tests also helps the person decide on whether it is alright and safe for him to drive. The fact remains though that even if a person consumes very little alcohol, it is better to avoid driving.

In order to self test for alcohol content level, there are a few important things to be followed. First of all, the expiry date on the package has to be checked. The apparatus should be stored in an appropriate place as per the instructions on the package. If one is not sure of the instructions, he or she can call the toll free number printed on the package to clear any kind of doubts.

The apparatus must be checked for expiry date and stored according to the instructions given in the package. Looking in the kit for instructions on foods and medicines to be avoided before the test is very important.

In case of timing the test, it makes sense to use a clock or a watch rather than guessing. If a person finds it difficult to perform the test himself, he should take someone's help to get accurate results. A person must conduct the test on himself at least fifteen minutes after consumption of alcohol.

Procedure

All manual breath alcohol reading apparatus comes with a balloon. The user is required to blow into the balloon preferably in one long breath rather than many short breaths. The balloon has to be attached to the end of the glass tube containing crystals and air from the balloon starts flowing into the tube. After a minute or so, stop the procedure and look at the colour of the crystals to judge the alcohol content.

Usually, the intensity is measured with the number of bands which change from yellow to green and the depth of change in the colour.

If one is using the electronic meter to measure alcohol content level, the meter has to be first turned on in order to warm up for a few minutes. With the mouth placed on the mouthpiece, breath has to be blown in a steady manner into the machine for the duration of time specified in the apparatus. This has to be done in one single long breath and not in several short breaths.

Results come up almost immediately on the digital display screen. Before the next testing, the apparatus has to be reset. Readings usually come in percentage or coloured lights.

Blood alcohol content test

Blood alcohol content or the BAC test is the most commonly used and reliable test for testing the level of alcohol content in the body. Alcohol gets absorbed in the blood stream at a fast rate and it is possible to measure the alcohol content in the blood almost immediately after consumption.

However, the alcohol content is at its peak about an hour after the person consumes it. Most of the alcohol is broken down and synthesized by the liver and the remaining content is excreted from the body through exhalation from the breath and urine.

Blood alcohol test is most of the times used for legal purposes. Most of the times, this is used to determine the level of alcohol in the body of a person who is accused of drunken driving. Physical symptoms of alcohol intoxication includes unsteady gait, lack of co ordination, confusion in the mind and erratic driving which is absolutely unsafe. Such people driving on the roads are considered to be a safety hazard and are legally punished.

Though the procedure of the blood alcohol test is quite simple, any prescribed or non prescribed medicines that the person may be taking will affect the results. So, it is important to keep the health professional informed about the various medicines the person is on before conducting this test.

This test is done just like the normal bloods tests. The upper arm is tied tight to feel the veins properly. Blood is then collected in the tube after inserting the needle gently in the vein after cleaning the site with a non alcoholic antiseptic. After collection of blood, the needle is removed and gauze is pressed on to the needle site and the tied cloth is removed from the upper arm.

The pressure on the needle site has to be kept up for some time in order to ensure that the bleeding has stopped completely. In rare cases when the bleeding does not stop for some time and there is a swelling of veins, warm compress two to three times a day helps.

One important thing to be remembered is that if a person is on any of the aspirin drugs, he has to inform the health professional who is conducting the BAC test on him. Aspirin drugs do not allow the blood to clot easily and this may cause excessive bleeding.

If the result shows a blood alcohol content of 0.08 or above which is about 80 mg/dL he is said to be under intoxication. Alcohol level below 0.08 is considered to be safe. For persons under 18 years of age, levels even below 0.08 are not acceptable in most parts of the world.

Though the blood alcohol content test is more accurate than the breathalyzer, the results may vary from person to person depending on his weight, time of food intake during alcohol consumption and his or her tolerance level.

Normally, the stage of intoxication is reached by a person when his BAC measures between 0.08 and 0.10. If the result shows 0.10 reading, it means the person will already be slurred in his speech with very little coordination and confused thinking.

A reading of 0.20 includes physical symptoms of vomiting, seeing double and finding it very difficult to walk or move around as there is very little coordination. If the level of alcohol is 0.30, the person's body becomes cool and he experiences tremors. He or she may also experience memory loss and pass out.

At the level of 0.40, the person usually experiences extreme difficulty in breathing and goes into coma. He or she is on the way to death. Level 0.50 and above indicates sure death from alcoholism.

One thing that has to be remembered is that the blood alcohol content test only tells us the alcohol content in the blood at the time of the test. It does not give any indication of whether the person is an alcohol dependent or has alcohol related problems.

Factors which affect alcohol content in the blood of different persons include the number of drinks taken per hour, concentration of alcohol in the drinks, body weight

of the person concerned, sex of the person, age, amount of food intake before or during alcohol consumption, mixers used to mix the drink, prescribed or non prescribed drugs the person is on, etc.

If a person weighs more, it means he has more water content in his body and this dilutes the alcohol and therefore the results may show lesser content. Women generally have lesser water content and more fat in their bodies. This means, the alcohol content in their bodies for the same number of drinks taken will be more than for men. Certain hormones in a woman also slow down the synthesis of alcohol showing more alcohol concentration.

Older people tend to get high on fewer drinks than the younger ones. This is because their metabolism is relatively slower and alcohol is synthesized slower than in the young people. This results in higher alcohol content in their blood for the same number of drinks as compared to the younger people.

Food plays an important role too. Food has the tendency to absorb alcohol in the blood. Consequently, if you are on an empty stomach while drinking, alcohol content will be more than if you had eaten or are eating even while you drink.

Is alcoholism a disease?

Although alcoholism does not have the symptoms of a normal disease, it can be called a mental or a psychological disorder. It all starts with getting obsessed with the idea of drinking. The mental obsession which drives a person to repeatedly drink is nothing but a thought process over which there is no control.

The thought process repeatedly occurs in the brain driving the person to fix a drink. The person is unable to get over the physical compulsion and craving to have a drink. Since man does not consciously put the thought in his mind, he is not able to control the effect and feels the only way to get the thought out is to do what his mind says.

The most difficult part of all this is that most of the times, the alcoholic does not even know the thought is there hidden in his mind surfacing repeatedly. He is not able to understand what is driving him towards this undesirable habit. This is why even if an alcoholic genuinely puts in effort to stop drinking and wants to give up the habit he is not able to do so without professional help.



One important fact to be noticed is that alcoholism as a disease progresses very fast without the person's knowledge. The fact that one or two drinks satisfies his or her craving may soon sub consciously increase to six or seven drinks and worsening further to even ten or twelve drinks. By the time the person realizes it is usually too late. The drinking stops only if the person passes out. By this time alcohol has wholly and completely taken over his or her life.

Rehabilitation and help is in the hands of the affected person. If he is mentally prepared to come out of the obsession, he can approach one of the innumerable help centres. If he needs help but is not willing to take it, then intervention is the only alternative.

Medical implications of alcohol dependence

Apart from social and psychological consequences, alcohol dependence leads to a lot of physical health problems. Liver is the most commonly affected organ. Apart from this, alcohol creates problem related to the skin, permanent impotence, appetite loss, vitamin deficiencies, damage of central nervous system, etc.

Alcohol has a significant effect on the functioning of the brain. Consumption of alcohol depresses the central nervous system. With increased consumption, the motor skills get affected and actions start becoming clumsy. Alcohol dependence affects the behavioural pattern of the individual to a great extent. Very acute and prolonged drinking can actually cause damage to the brain.

Positive effects include the decrease in cardiovascular disease due to moderate drinking. This fact has been proved beyond doubt. Especially, the risk of heart

related diseases decrease tremendously if alcohol especially red wine is consumed moderately over a period of time.

This is due to the existence of certain polyphenol antioxidants present in red wines which favours the health of the heart. Other benefits of moderate alcohol consumption includes an increase in the HDL or cholesterol which is good for the health, decrease in blood clotting or thrombosis, reduced spasm of artery related to stress, increases the flow of blood in the coronary, increases the sensitivity of insulin, etc.

Moderate drinking also has a positive impact on the progress of coronary heart disease. It actually decreases the risk of CHD. Moderate indicates not more than one or two drinks a day. Moderate drinking has similar positive effects on coronary vascular disease or angina pectoris and also on patients who are on their way to recovery after coronary stenting.

Similarly, moderate drinking has proven to be an aid in the reduction of heart attacks or strokes or even in a person who is recovering from an attack. Alcohol abuse on the other hand increases the risk of a stroke or a heart attack. Even one drink a week has shown significant results.

Biologically speaking....

A lot of research has gone into showing that alcoholism is indeed a disease which has a biological basis. Looking at alcoholism as a disease rather than a habit has a lot of positive connotations.

People started looking at alcoholics with sympathy rather than hatred and started viewing alcoholism as a disease which has to be treated. The social stigma associated with alcoholism relented a bit and various treatment options came into being.

Experts feel that apart from biological, there is also a genetic association with the disease of alcoholism. According to them, this disease is inherited from fathers and forefathers. The blame on the alcoholic is not so severe as people started viewing them with sympathy as they have inherited a disease which they had no control over.

Other researchers feel that alcoholism is not genetic but purely biological. They argue that certain individuals are prone to addictions including addiction to alcohol

and that they cannot do without it. They feel that this is due to strong biological reasons.

As this theory claims strong biological evidence this disease of alcoholism accordingly has to be treated as nothing but a disease. The person afflicted with alcoholism has to be pitied as with any other chronic disease. It goes without saying that as with other diseases, alcoholism afflicted patients must undergo treatment in an attempt to cure his or her life and lead a normal, healthy and happy life.

Cardiomyopathy

Cardiomyopathy also known as the “holiday heart syndrome” can affect a person who is an alcohol dependent. This condition which is commonly referred to as alcoholic cardiomyopathy results from excessive and compulsive drinking of alcohol. This in turn results in the weakening of the muscles of the heart. Heart is subsequently unable to pump blood at the required rate affecting thereby the other parts of the body like brain, lungs, liver, etc.

Damage of the muscles of the heart is due to the fact that alcohol has toxic effects on these muscle cells. This condition leads to failure of heart function due to reduced rate of pumping of the blood. A lot of tissues all over the body are affected due to this and results in damaging the organ systems.

This condition is mostly prevalent among men aged between 35 and 55 years. But, anyone who is alcohol dependant or consumes too much alcohol is vulnerable to alcoholic cardiomyopathy.

Nervous system

Alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence has a direct effect on the central nervous system. It acts as a depressant and affects the nervous system as acute intoxication, symptoms of withdrawal and even damage to the nervous system in extreme cases.

A person who is intoxicated with alcohol has a flushed face, smells strongly of liquor, sweats excessively, exhibits symptoms of nausea and vomiting, etc. Apart from all this, he exhibits uneven gait while walking and sometimes even falls down. This is

because of the slowing down of the motor nerve functions. The person also becomes disoriented and confused and may sometimes even black out.

A disorder of the nerves arising due to excessive drinking is called alcoholic neuropathy. This is a result of the reduction of the functions of the nerves due to the action of toxins present in the alcohol.

A person afflicted with alcoholic neuropathy feels less or no sensation in certain parts of the body and feels a tingling sensation in the hands and feet. The muscles become frail and the ankles therefore become weak. Alcoholic neuropathy also produces symptoms of nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, frequent urination and impotence. In extreme or severe cases, the nervous system which is responsible for autonomous functions or involuntary functions like heart beat, is damaged beyond repair.

Alcoholic neuropathy can be diagnosed by performing a neurological examination which is actually nothing but a few physical examinations which are not painful. This examination evaluates the functions of the nerves including the autonomic nervous system, reaction of senses and strength of the muscles.

Another way to diagnose this condition is through the electromyography. With this test, the electrical activity in the patient's muscular system is evaluated. This test checks for whether the impulses are passed on back and forth between the muscles and the nerves properly. This test finds out effectively whether the condition is due to weak muscles or diseased nerves.

Another test is the nerve conduction velocity test. This test evaluates how fast the impulses are transmitted in the nerves. This test is conducted simultaneously along with the electromyography test. In order to find out the extent of disorder biopsy is performed on the nerves, muscles and tissues.

Alcoholic neuropathy can be treated only by providing treatment for alcoholism. Keeping away from drinks is a good idea for treating this condition. Physiotherapy is generally administered to alleviate the pain in the muscles and joints. In case of extreme numbness, doctors may also prescribe some drugs. Above all, a balanced and healthy diet works wonders in treating alcoholic neuropathy.

Peptic Ulcer

Consumption of alcohol results in the increase of stomach acid production. This in turn results in irritation of the stomach and increase in ulcer symptoms. When alcohol is consumed, the LES or the lower esophageal sphincter relaxes causing the stomach contents to flow back to the esophageal tube.

While it is better to avoid taking alcohol for a person suffering from ulcer, you can still have that occasional moderate drink without suffering from ulcer by following a few tips. The alcoholic drink can be diluted with water or soda to reduce the concentration. Restricting the number of drinks to one or two a day helps in avoiding peptic ulcers.

White wine can be had instead of the red wine as this has lesser toxic content. Having drinks which are non alcoholic is the best thing to do. Upon identifying the brand of drink which creates the most problem with the stomach, it is better to keep away from that particular brand.

Liver

Diseases arising due to consumption of alcohol are called the alcohol induced liver disease or the ALD. In the United States alone, there are a lot of deaths occurring due to ALD.

Fatty liver is one disease of the liver which can be cured by keeping away from alcohol. There are other liver diseases which cannot be cured. These include the cirrhosis of the liver which is the continuous scarring of the tissues of the liver, alcoholic hepatitis which is the constant inflammation of the liver, etc. Both these conditions are mostly fatal and there are no treatment options.

Liver is very essential part of the body functioning. If the liver is even slightly damaged due to excessive consumption of alcohol, it results in an imbalance and problem in the body metabolism. This further result in malfunctioning of the organs. Various physiological mechanisms set in which aids in the progression of the disease. Medications can only reduce the suffering due to the disease. There are no medicines available which can cure the condition.

Metabolism

Alcohol consumed is synthesized in the liver. Some of the by products of this metabolism including acetaldehyde are extremely toxic in fact more toxic than alcohol. Free radicals are a group of products resulting from the metabolism. These are very harmful and damage the cells of the liver and causes inflammation.

This in turn affects some of the important functions of the liver like production of vital energy. The natural defence mechanism of the body against radicals is also reduced due to alcohol abuse or dependence and this eventually leads to damage of the liver.

Inflammation

When the tissue of any organ gets damaged or infected this results in the response of the body in the form of inflammation. The role of inflammation is to control the spreading of the disease in order to get the mechanism of defence or the immune system of the body in order.

Free radicals are also generated as a defence mechanism. These radicals destroy the micro organisms which cause diseases. If alcohol is consumed in excess over a long period of time, free radicals are produced in excess resulting in the destruction of healthy tissues of the liver.

The intestine of the human being also contains a certain type of bacteria which aids in initiating ALD. When a person consumes alcohol excessively, endotoxin, a bacterial product passes into the blood stream through the walls of the intestine. When this reaches the liver, Kupffer cells which are specialized cells are activated. These cells stay in the blood and monitor or any signs of infection. The Kupffer cells releases a substance called cytokines which acts as a regulatory mechanism for the process of inflammation as a response to the presence of endotoxin.

Cytokines

When cell is damaged due to infection, cytokines are produced as an immune system by the liver cells. When alcohol is consumed the level of cytokine increases thereby producing symptoms resembling alcoholic hepatitis.

Cytokines result in the formation of scars, reduction of oxygen level in the liver cells, etc. All this leads to the death of liver cells. When the cells are damaged, the body

automatically and naturally triggers off the defence mechanism thereby producing more cytokines and the vicious cycle continues.

Formation of scars

Scars are generally formed over the wounds as a part of the process of healing. When a person consumes excessive alcohol, it results in death of the cells, inflammation and scars in various organs of the body, particularly the liver. This in turn changes and damages the whole structure of the liver thereby affecting its functioning.

The main symptom of the deadly disease of cirrhosis of the liver is scarring. Liver contains certain cells called the stellate cells which store vitamin A. When cytokines interact with these stellate cells, it results in damaging the cell and the cell thereby loses its Vitamin A stock. This eventually leads to the scarring of the tissue. When the stellate cells become narrower, it leads to blood vessel constriction and the oxygen supply to the liver cells becomes lesser.

As acetaldehyde activates the stellate cells directly and immediately, alcoholics develop the disease of cirrhosis of the liver without any warning signs of hepatitis.

Factors influencing ALD

Not all alcoholics are affected by cirrhosis. This depends on various factors including the genetic factors, gender of the person, hepatitis infection, diet followed by the drinkers, etc. Studying these factors in detail can make it easier for doctors to treat patients who are at a risk or who already are afflicted by alcohol induced liver diseases.

Genetic –

Genetically there are variations in the function and structure of the cell types and certain bio chemical substances present in the cells. These variations determine to a certain extent whether the person is susceptible to ALD or not. Extensive research is going on to understand these genetic factors. Conclusions that emerge from these researches can help in effectively treating liver conditions based on gene therapies.

Gender –

Women are generally affected easily by cirrhosis than men. Women are afflicted by ALD even if they consume lesser alcohol than the men and for a shorter period of time. Mortality rate due to ALD is also higher among women. Research is going on to determine the causes for the gender discrimination.

Hepatitis C –

Also known as HCV, the hepatitis C Virus plays an important role in the progression of ALD. The presence of HCV in a person speeds up the process and progress of alcohol induced liver diseases and they are infected by chronic liver diseases which are mostly fatal. Diseases like cirrhosis also manifest severely due to the presence of HCV.

People who are alcohol dependent and have the HCV in them are afflicted with liver diseases earlier in their lives even with lesser amount of drinks consumed than those who do not have this virus in them. HCV is generally treated with a drug called interferon. If the person is an alcoholic, this drug is not so effective in treating HCV as in a person who does not drink.

Diet –

Diet plays a major role in the progression of alcohol induced liver diseases. If a person for example is alcohol dependent and takes a diet with lesser carbohydrate and higher fat content, the damage to the liver will be faster. If the diet intake is balanced, the progression of ALD is slower.

ALD can be treated in some cases effectively. The main requirement for this is to keep away from alcohol. ALD like alcoholic hepatitis and fatty liver can be reversed with strict abstinence from alcohol. If the disease has progressed to a great extent and the person is terminally ill, the only option remaining is liver transplant. Patients suffering from alcoholic cirrhosis are usually advised to go in for liver transplantation as this is the only option open to them.

Research has shown that liver transplant in alcohol related patients has been successful and effective. Even if the patient is affected by Hepatitis C, it does not have an impact on the survival of the patient after liver transplant.

Certain medicines like acetaminophen which is a pain killer can speed up the damage to the liver of a patient who is a heavy drinker. This medicine interacts negatively and produces side effects which are quite adverse.

A lot of extensive research is going on in this field and hopefully there will be some interesting developments which will be a boon for people afflicted with alcohol induced liver disease. Whatever may be the developments, at the end of the day, the only thing that can help them is abstinence from the dreadful habit of excessive drinking.

Apart from research on treatment, a lot of effort is taken by various organizations to bring in awareness among the people regarding the ill effects of alcohol consumption.

Effect of alcohol on development of the brain

Alcohol has a very negative effect on the development of the brain in people who consume drinks excessively on a long term basis. People especially youths find it difficult to retrieve information from their brains be it verbal or non verbal. Alcohol consumption in excess also results in depleted brain cell formation.

If an alcoholic gives up drinking for a certain period of time, his or her brain cells start regrowing. A large percentage of alcoholics are affected by myopathy and peripheral neuropathy.

Moderate drinking has a positive effect on a person's ability to think which is called cognition. This fact has been revealed after extensive studies conducted on this subject. Studies also revealed that people who drank excessively or who did not drink at all had very poor cognition ability or the ability to think.

Dementia and alcoholism

Dementia is a condition which results in problems associated with learning, cognition and memory. Consumption of alcohol in excess affects the cells of the brain resulting in poor judgement and 'lack of co ordination of physical actions.

Consumption of alcohol over a long period of time also causes certain problems with nutrition which in turn results in brain damage. This happens as the brain experiences deficiencies of certain vitamins.

A person afflicted with dementia will not be able to learn new thing easily even though the other mental faculties are alright. This may also result in certain changes in the person's personality. Obvious symptoms of this condition include feeling confused most of the times along with other memory related problems.

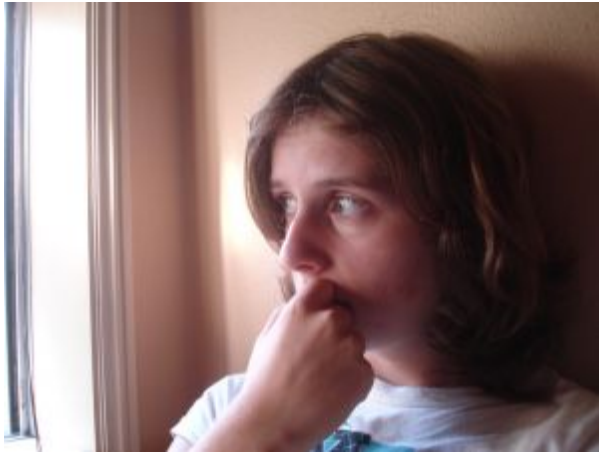
A person suffering from this condition normally remembers things that have happened long ago very clearly but is not able to remember things which have happened a few minutes ago. Another symptom is that the person afflicted by dementia keeps repeating the same questions not remembering that he or she has already asked this question before and it has been answered.

Even during a conversation, the person suffering from dementia keeps repeating the same thing over and over again using the same expressions and words. Apart from doing this the person may be perfectly normal otherwise in matters like planning, being witty, playing games like chess, cards, etc.

Another variation of the alcoholic dementia is the Wernicke Korsakoff syndrome. This condition may occur along with the normal dementia or may occur independently.

The Wernicke Korsakoff syndrome damages more than one nerve in the central nervous system which includes the spinal cord, the peripheral nervous system and the brain. This disease exhibits symptoms found in alcohol withdrawal. Alcohol consumed over a long period of time causes some nutritional problems in a person. These problems include vitamin B-1 deficiency.

The symptoms accompanying the Korsakoff syndrome also known as Korsakoff psychosis include loss of memory, loss of intellect or cognitive skills resulting in difficulty in solving problems and learning, etc.



One symptom which is quite scary is the way the person who is afflicted by this disease makes up convincing and detailed stories about their experiences. They do this in order to cover up memory gaps which result from damage of parts of the brain.

There are certain changes in personality which point out towards the developing dementia in a person. An alcoholic may exhibit gradual symptoms like frustration, irritability, anger, instability in their moods, emotional instability, jealousy, paranoia, suspicion, less emotional responses, dropping of inhibitions, fear of loneliness, insensitivity towards others, etc.

These people also are not able to perform tasks which are quite familiar, not able to connect to people, not able to take instant decisions, not have the confidence to start or complete anything on their own, etc.

A person afflicted with Wernicke Korsakoff syndrome also find it difficult to be fluent with words, and consequently are not able to follow conversations clearly. They tend to keep repeating what they say and also repeating questions.

These people experience a lost sense of timing, they wander away aimlessly and get lost even in areas which are familiar to them and do not recognize acquaintances and friends. They also start neglecting their health or even their work and property.

Alzheimer's disease among alcoholics

There are a lot of similarities between Alzheimer's disease and alcoholic dementia. Alzheimer's disease or AD is a disorder associated with the brain which is degenerative in nature. Characteristics of this disease include memory loss, significant changes in cognitive abilities and a reduction in the life span.

AD is more prevalent among the older people. Millions of people are afflicted with this condition all over the world. Alcohol is one of the factors which aid in the development and progression of this disease. A lot of research and studies are being made to find out ways and means of effectively preventing Alzheimer's disease. As of now there is no significant treatment method or cure available for this disease.

Consumption of alcohol excessively over a long period of time is found to be one initiating and aiding the progression of this deadly disease. As we have seen earlier, alcoholism leads to cognitive problems like dementia, certain disorders of the brain and changes in the chemistry of the brain, etc. As these symptoms are also part of the Alzheimer's disease, alcohol is suspected to aid in the development of this disease.

The biggest hurdle in the analysis and study of the possible effects of alcohol in Alzheimer's disease is the similarities of the symptoms between alcoholic dementia and AD. But research in this field is going on extensively because if found to be one of the causes, alcoholism is a preventable factor and knowing about the effects of alcoholism on the progression of AD may also give us an idea of the possible causes of AD.

Heavy consumption of alcohol results in the shrinking of brain tissues thereby resulting in neurological changes which are degenerative in nature and a reduction in cognitive ability especially with aging. One important positive factor could be that in contrast to AD related to aging, AD due to alcoholism could be reversible.

Keeping away from alcohol for a considerable time has shown a marked decrease in atrophy diseases. Research has also proven that there was no difference in the number of neurons or the brain cells between alcoholics and control subjects who were matched to that age. Loss was mainly in the white matter of the brain which consists of the fibres of the nerve connecting the neurons.

As the number of neurons remains the same, researchers conclude that the condition can be reversed by keeping away from alcohol whereby there is possible re establishment of the connection between the neurons. Studies have shown that certain brain cells which support the neurons are damaged due to excessive alcoholism which can be restored easily.

Tremors due to alcoholism

Tremors, even though not life threatening is a condition which acts as a depressant for the person suffering from it. The person who is suffering from this cannot hold a glass steadily, as his hands keeps shaking due to these tremors. This largely impacts his confidence level making his mind weak and unsteady.

As his or her movements are not coordinated, the movements become shaky and involuntary, as in epilepsy, myoclonus, tic, twitch, dyskinesia, chorea, etc. No matter how much the person tries, he or she is unable to stop the tremors which are noticeable more in the hands.

Tremors may occur persistently or at intervals, i.e. it can be regular or irregular and is not consistent in its occurrence. Tremors may also afflict any part of the body like the neck, head, trunk, legs, tongue, hands, etc. It is more pronounced though in the hands as it is not supported like the other parts of the body. Hand is also used for finer movements.

When the tremor occurs, the person usually experiences rigidity or tightness of muscles or flaccidity. When a person suffering from this condition faces a situation which is very tense or unfamiliar to him or her the tremors increase. For example attending an examination or interview, lying to someone, signing documents of importance, etc are situations where the person become tense and the tremors in his body increases drastically.

On experiencing these tremors, the person goes through a feeling of embarrassment due to the fear factor on anticipation of failure of execution of the task. Consequently, they start avoiding such situations and become partially and functionally disabled to that particular action.

Toxic tremors are tremors which are induced by consumption of alcohol in excess. These tremors can even occur due to drug or alcohol withdrawal.

Alcoholism and digestive system

Excessive drinking is known to cause problems in the gastrointestinal system. Acidity is a very common side effect of drinking. The toxins present in alcohol create

disturbances in the digestive process thereby causing acidity or acid reflux. This condition can be reversed with abstinence from alcohol.

Some positive effects of moderate drinking

According to recent studies, researchers have found that moderate drinking actually makes sure a person does not develop gall bladder stones. Research has also shown that drinking moderately can make sure the person is at a lower risk of developing stones in his or her kidney.

Diabetes is another area where moderate drinking is found to have a positive impact. This is because of the fact that alcohol in the system increases the sensitivity of insulin. All these are in the preliminary stages of research and have not been conclusively proven yet.

Rheumatoid arthritis is another condition which has a positive impact from moderate alcohol consumption. This is because of the fact that alcohol is found to increase the bone mineral density in both men and women especially women who are undergoing menopause.

Alcohol consumption and risk of Cancer

Alcohol consumption in excess is one of the major causes of cancer. Cancer kills almost around five hundred thousand Americans every year. It is the next highest killer after heart diseases.

The most common cancers afflicting people is the breast, lung and bowel cancer. There is enough evidence to prove that alcohol consumption is one of the major causes for being afflicted with cancer. An astounding two to four percent of cancer cases are due to alcohol consumption.

Cancer due to excessive consumption of alcohol occurs mainly in the mouth, pharynx and oesophagus. Alcohol is also associated with liver and colorectal cancer. As we know, cancer is nothing but the affected cells of the body growing without any control. These cells get formed into masses and infiltrate the normal tissues and cells of the body destroying them.

There is a regulation followed by the body as per its nature whereby the cells grow and multiply within the specified framework of the tissues in the body. When the

cancer cells start growing and acting independently, problem starts. These cells do not restrict their growth with the boundaries of the tissues.

Carcinogen is the substance which promotes the initiation and promotion of the deadly disease of cancer. Carcinogen plays an important role in aiding the spread of cancer in the initial stages.

The disease of cancer first manifests itself when the DNA of the cells get distorted irreversibly. This results in the triggering of the cell to divide. The cells also start reproducing independently and indefinitely.

Cells start mutating and multiplying at a fast rate and is aided by carcinogen. As the disease progresses, the mutating and multiplying cells form huge masses or tumors and start spreading from the initial site to other parts of the body.

Studies have clearly shown a link between the consumption of alcohol and certain types of cancer. As a person drinks more, he is at a greater risk for certain types of cancer. Research has also shown that alcohol in excess triggers certain mechanisms which lead to the development and spreading of certain types of cancer.

Cancer due to alcohol consumption affects mostly the digestive system. This includes the mouth, the larynx, the pharynx, esophagus, etc. there are also certain evidences which show that alcohol consumption can cause cancer of breast, colon and liver.

Digestive system

Risk of esophageal cancer is very high in people who are chronic drinkers. The alcohol intake is directly related to the risk of oesophageal cancer. Alcohol intake in large quantities results in cancers of the larynx, pharynx and mouth. If the person is also a smoker, then there are more chances of him being affected by this disease.

Liver

Heavy drinking results in the development of a condition called cirrhosis of the liver which in turn leads to cancer.

Breast

Studies have shown a marked increase in the risk of breast cancer with alcohol consumption. The reason for this is when a person consumes alcohol in excess; it results in the increase of the level of estrogen especially in pre menopausal women. When the estrogen level increases, women are at a higher risk of being affected with breast cancer.

Colon

Studies are underway to determine the extent of association between alcohol consumption and colorectal cancer. Though the data is not sufficient enough to prove this conclusively, there is a consistent evidence of increased risk of this type of cancer related to excessive alcohol consumption.

Extensive research is on to determine the extent of alcohol's influence in propagating cancer. There are evidences as of now which show a direct relationship between alcohol intake and development of mouth and esophageal cancer.

Alcohol indirectly causes cancers of the breast and liver. This means that alcohol triggers certain mechanisms which in turn aids in the development of cancer.

Oncogenes

There is enough evidence to show that oncogenes are affected by alcohol consumption. Excessive alcoholism affects these genes and modifies them in the beginning stages of the development of the disease.

This happens because of the fact that when alcohol is synthesized it results in the formation of acetaldehyde. Acetaldehyde prevents a cell from repairing its damaged

DNA. This results in mutations which progresses towards the initiation of the deadly disease of cancer. Oncogenes are over expressed in heavy drinkers initiating the process of cancer.

Co carcinogen

It has been proved that though alcohol by itself is not a carcinogen, it aids in increasing the effects of carcinogen produced by other chemicals. Conclusive evidence is found in cases where the person both smokes and drinks. He is at almost a 35 percent more risk of cancer than a person who neither smokes nor

drinks. This shows that there is a reaction between carcinogens from both alcohol and tobacco.

Alcohol reacts with some enzymes proving its co carcinogenic effect. These are the enzymes which detoxifies substances entering the human body. These enzymes also play an important role of increasing the toxic level in carcinogens.

Cytochrome P-450 is one such enzyme. Dietary alcohol aids in the presence of this enzyme in organs like lungs, intestines, liver and oesophagus. If a person is a smoker, the carcinogen from the tobacco or even from diet becomes more effective and potent due to the presence of this enzyme as they too pass through the same organs.

Nutrition

Excessive intake of alcohol over a long period of time alters the digestive processes in the body to a great extent and this may in turn lead to the development of cancer. Experiments also point out to the fact that since certain vitamins and minerals in the body like vitamin B, vitamin E, zinc, iron, etc are reduced due to consumption of alcohol, this result in the aiding of certain cancer types.

How alcoholism affects family life

It goes without saying that the entire family of the alcoholic needs to go in for counseling and treatment according to psychologists. The family of an alcoholic is affected in various ways including psychologically, physiologically, sociologically, etc. The family has to be first diagnosed, prescribed a treatment involving the whole family, addressing and treating related abuse, divorce and sexual dysfunction, etc. Children and adult children of alcoholics have to be specially treated. Taking the help of the spouse of the alcoholic is very important in order to evaluate the treatment.

Psychological influence of alcohol in a family

Alcoholics can be of any age, gender, cultural group, ethnic group, level of income, etc. Even people who are highly educated and aware are not spared by this habit. A person who is an alcoholic can even be a child; can be a teenager, or an adult. These people may have parents, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, etc as their family members.

Family life of an alcoholic is severely disrupted due to the person's habit causing unpleasantness and severe stress and tension. Family members are not able to handle the strife and behavioral problems arising out of this compulsive habit.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Studies have shown that if the parents have a drinking problem, it can even have an impact on the development of the fetus. This is because of the fact that alcohol which is consumed reaches all the organs and tissues of the mother's body which includes the placenta.



Alcohol from the placenta enters the fetus through the membrane. Such babies are born with a condition called FAS or the fetal alcohol syndrome. This can result in the babies being defective or deformed by birth. Statistics show an alarming number of babies being born with FAS in the United States each year.

Children who are born with FAS suffer throughout their lives for no fault of theirs. They are generally underweight and much shorter than normal children. Some of them are mentally retarded as their skull and brain is deformed. Since the alcohol

affects the central nervous system of these babies, some of them also have a groove in their upper lip centre which is very long.

Their facial features also characteristically differ from other normal children. Children afflicted by FAS generally have upper lips which are thin, face which is flat, groove on their upper lip, eye openings which are narrower, etc.

Psychological problems associated with these children involve inability to concentrate on their studies, shorter span of attention, lack of sufficient judgment, memory problems, problems with solving and a whole lot of other problems associated with behavior.

Children afflicted with FAS generally lack social skills too. They tend to get easily frustrated thereby throwing temper tantrums very often. They exhibit symptoms of being over active and are not able to sit in a place.

They are impulsive by nature and their actions are not very coordinated. Some of them also exhibit symptoms of speech and hearing impairment. One sad thing about this is this condition is not treatable.

If the parent is irresponsible enough to give their child the FAS, then the child is stuck with an irreversible condition throughout his or her life. The effect is thus permanent and cannot be treated or altered. A lot of children lead a retarded life due to the irresponsible behavior of their parents.

Children of Alcoholics – COA

Children who are normal by birth with alcoholic parents also tend to go through problems of other kind. Very noticeable symptoms in these children include low self esteem, a helpless feeling, lack of confidence, feeling of guilt and loneliness, panic resulting from a fear of abandonment, mental depression, etc.

Children of alcoholics or the COAs are generally not very happy and vibrant like the other children. They constantly go through a complex whereby they feel whatever is happening is because of them. They face this feeling of guilt that the member in their family be it their mother or father is drinking because of something he did wrong.

These children go through unimaginable tension and lead a stress filled life. They may even exhibit symptoms of frequently crying without any reason, wetting their beds, and having nightmares.

These children tend to avoid company as much as possible and consequently try all the time to avoid going to school. They dread interacting with other children. Older children exhibit symptoms of being a perfectionist, being obsessed with hoarding money, being very self conscious and avoiding company of any kind.

This is because they are very conscious of their selves as they feel they are somehow different from normal people due to their situation at home. Their behavior sometimes even starts resembling their alcoholic member at home. Teenagers especially go through a very tough life. They develop various kinds of phobias and face torture throughout their lives.

School life is miserable for these children of alcoholics. They generally do not get to concentrate on their studies at home due to the tension filled atmosphere there. Due to their laid back attitude, these children do not get along very well or establish any kind of a relationship with their teachers and other children studying with them.

Children of alcoholics do not have the self confidence at any stage to express anything that they feel. Even if they lag behind in studies they do not have the confidence in approaching their teachers or other students for any kind of academic help. Hence they most often than not, fail in their studies and repeat years. Some of them even reach the stage where they are either sent out of school or drop out on their own.

One of the major problems faced by the COAs at home is the unpredictability of moods of their alcoholic parents. If both parents are alcoholics, then the children face a miserable and tension filled life, especially if they are alone and do not have a brother or a sister to fall back on.

These children do not know what to expect from the alcoholic parent and are always on the edge. Their behavior also becomes unstable and they start showing their insecurity by attracting attention to themselves.

They do this by getting into undesirable habits like stealing, playing traunt and fighting frequently with others. Because of the unpredictable nature of the moods of their parents, these children are unable to understand how they themselves are to behave in different circumstances.

Surveys have shown that almost thirty percent of women from unstable family environments have been drop outs at school and around twenty percent of the men from such families have dropped out of colleges.

COAs try to please their alcoholic parent by trying to get good grades in school, by trying to act in such a way that will make the parent happy always, etc. They do all this to avoid being a target of temper tantrums. They also tiptoe around the house in order not to wake up the parent who is sleeping under the influence of alcohol. These children are always going around with a feeling of guilt that the root cause of all the problems is themselves.

They are thus convinced that the parent is drinking so much only because he or she is not able to please them in some way. They also feel guilty for the fact that they are not able to help the alcoholic parent in giving up the habit.

These are the unhappy households which are breeding grounds for crimes like incest, domestic violence, etc and conditions like manic depressions, suicides, etc. Almost seventy five percent of the father daughter incest cases are due to the alcoholic tendencies of the parent.

These children who are victims of incest and molestation carry their guilt throughout their lives and for them consuming alcohol themselves become their only way of escape from their feelings. Such children normally end up as alcoholics. Children of alcoholics have to be necessarily given counseling and treated early in their lives if they are to be saved from a miserable existence throughout their lives.

Alcohol and adolescents

These days you will find that many young people who are right in their early teens have taken up to drinking alcohol and for some it may be due to keeping company with peers for others it has become a serious drinking problem.

Many adolescents are quite unaware of the risks involved in consuming alcohol and this is the main reason why many have become vulnerable to this drinking habit. It is believed that the adolescent brain is very plastic in nature and this is a main factor which helps in neuromaturation which is one of the main reasons why many adolescents are addicted to alcohol.



When adolescents consume too much of alcohol especially in their growing years when the brain is developing leads to brain damage.

When an adolescent or teenager drinks he or she begins to show a marked difference in the way they behave. This change in their behavioural pattern leads to plenty of problems where they begin to take up risks which involve them to do things which may end up causing not only hurt to themselves but also to others.

Take for instance you will find that there are many adolescents especially boys who after a bout of heavy drinking tend to challenge each other to perform dare devil stunts like driving a car at high speed or to car races with each other.

Driving under the influence of alcohol itself can be very dangerous even for adults and for adolescents it is a very serious matter as it can cost them their lives what to talk of the lives of others when they meet with accidents.

When adolescents take to drink especially like binge drinking it has been found that their brains tend to become more vulnerable to becoming destroyed than when an adult does binge drinking.

This is due to the structure of the brain which is still in the developing stages. That's why an adolescent who has taken to drinking on a regular basis would be prone to having a brain which has had excessive damage because of this drinking.

An adolescent who has been consuming alcohol on a regular basis or who has become a habitual drinker will suffer from a disorder known as Alcohol Use Disorder or AUD. When an adolescent suffers from this disorder he or she will exhibit many

symptoms like reduced memory, they would have trouble when it comes to solving problems, their visual skills will decrease and their speech also becomes incoherent and slurred.

This is also because as they begin to consume drink after drink the damage to the neurons also increases and this is because the brain is unable to cope with damage which the alcohol is causing.

Adolescents do not realise the effects that alcohol can have on the development of their brain and what consuming too much of alcohol can do to the growth of their brains over a period of time. If this drinking disorder is not tackled at the appropriate time then it could lead to serious implications in later life as they turn into adults. It is important that such AUD's are recognised in adolescents as early as possible and the necessary steps are taken to bring them out of this problem.

Alcohol has been found to be the main cause of learning and memory impairments in adolescents. Studies have found that as the amount of alcohol consumption increases the impairment to the brain also increases.

Alcohol has been found to interfere with retaining new memories than the recollection of old ones. Like for instance when an adolescent takes to drinking heavily, he or she would find that they would not be able to learn the name of a person who has just been introduced to them and after a continuous round of drinks they will find that they would have totally even forgotten that the person was introduced to them in the first place let alone remembering their name.

Many adolescents after having continuous rounds of drinks have known to have blackouts where they face the eventuality of having forgotten the entire events that have taken place while they were drinking.

Many adolescents take to anti social behaviour because of their excessive drinking. This has been found from many studies among adolescents who have been drinking heavily and who have indulged in anti social activities. Drinking among adolescents can lead them to disorders like antisocial personality disorders.

When adolescents are faced with this type of disorder they exhibit a number of signs like they would resort to telling lies on a regular basis to cover up for what they are doing. They would run into problems with the law like rash driving or causing an accident under the influence of alcohol.

Other characteristics which adolescents would exhibit due to their persistent drinking habits would be their aggressive and often violent behaviour which would often lead them to having fights with others for even small reasons. They could also go into depressions or mood changes when they would always exhibit a feeling of being agitated all the time.

They would not care for the feelings of others and would certainly not exhibit any signs of repentance. They would also not be able to make friends that easily and certainly would not be able to keep their friends for long too.

Research studies have found that anti social behaviour due to consumption of alcohol has been known among adolescents of the age group of 19 to 20 years. Along with alcohol, most adolescents also consume drugs and in the United States of America it has been found that the number of junior high school and senior high school students who consume alcohol due it regularly on a monthly basis and adolescents are known to drink at least more than five drinks at a stretch.

Drinking more than 2 drinks continuously is called binge drinking ad this is very much prevalent among most students in the United States and elsewhere in the world. There are many dangerous side effects that all adolescents will face due to consumption of alcohol especially as a result of binge drinking.

Binge drinking makes adolescents lose their ability to pay attention while they engaged in an activity after a couple of drinks. It is common to find that there are many adolescents who take to driving vehicles at high speeds and losing control over their vehicles which leads to car crashes and gruesome deaths. Research has shown that the rate of death among adolescents who have been involved in car crashes is much higher.

Binging on alcohol also causes many adolescents to go into deep depression and this coupled with stress lead to many deaths at an early age. Studies among adolescents have found that those attempting suicide have been those who were on hooked binge drinking.

It has been found that parties which encouraged binge drinking among adolescents were places where many young females faced sexual assaults and were raped by male adolescents under the influence of alcohol. Also after a couple of drinks many young adolescents were found to indulge in sexual activities and the sex was always of high risk category which resulted in unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases like Aids.

To find out if your adolescent is a binge drinker or is abusing alcohol it is advisable to look out for clear symptoms which include telling lies, becoming abusive both verbally and physically towards other people, smell of alcohol on their person and breath, mood swings, going into depressions, changing their friends circle etc. if any of these symptoms are found in any adolescent by a parent it is better that the parent seeks medical help at once.

Some cases many adolescents die due to excessive drinking and this is known as alcohol poisoning. This happens when they resort to drinking an excessive amount of alcohol within a short time. What happens in alcohol poisoning is that the alcohol consumed causes the functions of the various organs in the body to slow down.

When the bodily functions slow down it leads to choking, stoppage of breathing and heart failure resulting in death. These adolescents who fall prey to alcohol poisoning should be immediately taken to hospital at the earliest. At the hospital doctors would give them emergency treatment like oxygen and fluids etc.

It is parents who should look out for symptoms in their teenagers when they take to drinking, smoking, and experimenting with drugs, sex etc. Most parents when they face such problems are at a loss as to what they should do to help their teenagers come out such problems.

Parents are unable to digest the fact that their children who have now stepped into adolescence have begun to indulge in binge drinking, drugs smoking etc. Because of this many parents refuse to accept the problems engulfing their children and turn a blind eye to them which actually is detrimental to the adolescents themselves.

Parents should begin to take responsibility and do all that is possible to help their adolescents to overcome this habit of binge drinking. There are many reasons why most adolescents take to alcohol and drugs. Most of the teenagers try it out as an experiment only to fall prey to the bad habits as they try to fit into peer groups.

Many adolescents are of the opinion that it is only drugs and alcohol which is the sure success to be socially acceptable without realising the repercussions that alcohol and drugs can have on their lives later in life as they turn into adults.

There are still other children who in order to escape the problems in family life and the stress they are put into to perform well in their academic life that makes them

take to drinking alcohol, initially in small amounts which later leads them into binge drinking.

As responsible parents who want to see their adolescents grow up into responsible adults the first thing parents should do is to make sure that their children are imbued with good values as they grow up. Adolescents have to be taught to be self confident and to trust their own judgment and to stand up for their right behaviour which will go a long way to help them stand up to peer pressure when it comes to drinking and smoking. Children as they grow up into young adults should be taught that they should not be afraid to say No when it is needed.

It is the responsibility of parents to make sure that they themselves do not drink or smoke heavily in front of their children and certainly not encourage their children to take sips of alcohol. Parents should feel free to broach the subject of alcohol and drugs with their teenagers or if they find that their adolescents are prone to binge drinking to immediately seek professional help.

Most of the adolescents will have the “I know it all” attitude and they would resist any advice and help from parents. Professionals who have been dealing with adolescents who have such problems will be better able to handle the situation and that is why it is important to seek professional help as soon as the problem of drinking or smoking is detected in an adolescent.

Parents should follow the same rules which they set for their children. If adolescents are banned from drinking or smoking it is also right that parents should also avoid these themselves. Studies have shown that when parents take to alcohol, their children will also drink themselves.

Parents as responsible adults should build healthy relationships with their adolescents and should never support teen drinking. Parents can join community support programs and school programs where adolescents are discouraged from drinking alcohol. Make sure that alcohol is not made available to these adolescents when they party.

Get to know who their friends are on a regular basis. If your adolescent has recently changed his or her set of friends then it is time you did look into their activities. Many adolescents who take up drinking alcohol are known to change their friends circle.

Another way that parents can resort to, to help their adolescents to keep away from alcohol is to encourage them to take up activities which are challenging and fun to keep their interests kindled.

Adult children of alcoholics

Adult children of alcoholics or the ACOAs often face most of the problems faced by the children and more. ACOAs normally do not realize the root cause for the various physiological, psychological and social problems that they are facing.

ACOA's are often afflicted with various kinds of mental disturbances. They tend to be more aggressive than necessary even in unwarranted situations. They also tend to be impulsive in their actions and decisions. Adult children of alcoholics are prone to mental depressions and are generally unstable in their behaviour.

ACOA's may go in for abuse of a different kind of psychoactive substances. They are unable to handle relationship of any kind and usually tend to shy away from forming a healthy relationship with anyone. They fail miserably in their lives and careers making wrong decisions and choices at every stage in their lives misguided by their parents.



The feeling of failure makes them feel low in self esteem. Adult children of alcoholics often are irresponsible towards their family. They follow the example of their alcoholic parent who themselves have been irresponsible towards their family and children.

ACOA's shy away from people in general and therefore have a lot of problems with their spouses. They generally try to avoid getting intimate as they are unable to trust anyone due to their past experiences. This is due to the fear factor that if they get close to someone they may get hurt just as their parents have hurt them throughout.

Studies in fact show that ACOA's tend to get intimate with people who are alcoholics or who are abusers. This way they are sure and on familiar grounds. They know how to deal with them as they are experienced.

Adult children of alcoholics tend to get into the habit of drinking more than adults who are not from families suffering from alcohol abuse. Genes thus play a major role in the development of the condition of alcoholism.

Adult children of alcoholics are not mentally equipped to deal with stressful situations effectively. Adults from such families tend to be unhealthy and visit their physicians more frequently as compared to people who have grown up in normal families.

Women who have been brought up in families with alcoholics usually have problems with their reproductive systems. They tend to visit gynaecologists more often than the women from normal families.

The spouse of the alcoholic is usually the person who suffers the most. They suffer from a feeling of hatred towards themselves and towards others which results from jealousy, self pity, etc. They also tend to get tired of their lives and start avoiding social contacts. They usually cannot tolerate other families which are very happy and openly start showing contempt and jealousy.

The family burden is more on them as they have to take on the responsibilities of both parents. They tend to be irritated all the time due to this and show their irritation on the alcoholic spouse and on the children. This creates a lot of stress and strain on their relationship with all the members of their family.

Financial problems faced by them are another factor which results from a huge chunk of the earning spent on alcohol. Families of alcoholics have to sacrifice on a

lot of privileges and sometimes even basic necessities and this result in further stress. A lot of divorce cases are a result of the influence of alcoholism.

Women and Alcohol

One of the major issues which affect most women is drinking. Did you know that women get affected by alcohol more than men even if consumed in a lesser quantity? In a woman's body the body fat is much higher while there is less water compared to the body of a man where it is just the opposite.

So, even if a woman consumes alcohol which has been diluted considerably, the effect it has on her will be much stronger than when compared to men consuming the same diluted alcohol. That is why when a woman consumes alcohol she gets drunk much faster than most men who consume the same quantity.

Studies have proven that when a man and a woman of the same height and weight take the same amount of alcohol, the blood alcohol level in the woman's body was much higher than that in the man's body. As a matter of fact the blood alcohol level in a woman's body rose to three times the level in a man's body and also it took three times longer for a woman to have the alcohol content in her blood to be eliminated from her body.

In a human body it is the liver which works finally to break down the alcohol and eliminate it from the blood. While in a man's body the liver works extra hard and takes about an hour to have one drink processed it takes much longer for the liver in a woman's body to do the same job.

Women take to drinking for many reasons. This is because women have to deal with a whole lot of issues in their life at different periods. Stress, diet, exercise, hormonal problems especially when they are passing through the menopausal stage and coping with other health related issues like cancer etc is driving many women to consume alcohol. Also drinking behaviour among women differs according to their age, the marital status of the woman and their role in life.

Though it has been found that women who tend to drink actually consume less amount of alcohol than men, the number of women who are among the heaviest drinkers is much higher. Also it is the younger women of the age group 18-34 who have more drink related problems compared to older women but it is women who are aged between 35-49 who are more dependent on alcohol to a greater extent.

Women who are holding multiple roles like those married women who work, are less addicted to alcohol than women who do not have multiple roles to play in life. In fact only when a woman loses a role to play in life that she is often found abusing alcohol.

This has been found in many cases where a woman has never got married or has been divorced or separated recently. These women were seen drinking heavily and have always ended up with alcohol related problems than women who have lost their husbands or those who are married.

It is important that women know how much to drink if at all that have to drink. It is a known fact that a woman should have only one drink per day while for a man it has to be restricted to two per day. This is called moderate drinking. If a woman has more than one drink per day than it can be risky and lead to car crashes, high blood pressure, stroke, violent behaviour, suicidal tendency and can cause even certain types of cancer.

A woman who is below 21 years of age should not be drinking at all. Women who intend to get pregnant or who are pregnant should avoid alcohol totally. Women who are under prescription medication for some illness should also avoid taking any alcohol as it can interfere with their medication and lead to other complications as far as their health is concerned.

Lower levels of alcohol are recommended for women because it is women who are at a greater risk than men when it comes to problems arising out of alcohol. This is because the alcohol which passes through the digestive system gets dispersed in the water which is present in the body. But the water content in the body of a woman is much less than that of a man who is of the same weight and height.

Since there is less water available the alcohol does not get diluted that easily and because of this the woman's brain and other organs present in the body get more exposed to the toxicity of the alcohol and its by products.

Even if women take up to moderate drinking they should be aware that they are prone to have much short and medium term health effects which can be both positive and negative. Though drinking moderately has health benefits like prevention of heart disease.

Studies have found that a woman who is over 55 years and who drinks moderately has lesser chances of getting coronary heart disease. But drinking heavily has actually known to cause massive heart attacks.



The risks involved in drinking are alcohol can cause car crashes if the woman has too much to drink. This is because even after one drink the woman's ability to drive gets impaired at a faster rate which causes car crashes. Alcohol when taken with medication can also increase or decrease the effects of the medication.

Alcohols when taken with medicines which tend to cause drowsiness have been known to increase the sedative effects of the medication and this could prove fatal to the woman who consumes it. Those women with a history of breast cancer in their family are at a higher risk to also get breast cancer if they take to drinking even if it is moderate drinking.

Research studies have proven that even one drink a day can lead to women contracting breast cancer. When a woman who is pregnant consumes alcohol even if it be one drink a day can cause what is known as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. In this Fetal alcohol Syndrome the pregnant woman's drinking can lead to birth defects in her unborn baby.

So it is wise that any woman who is thinking of becoming pregnant or is carrying a baby should be wise enough to stay away from anything which may have alcohol in it.

Drinking alcohol is also known to cause harm to the bones in a woman's body as women will not be able to gain the much needed calcium which is so vital for the strength of their bones. When women drink heavily their bones get damaged permanently.

Many women claim that their sexual experience increase after the consume alcohol. But contrary to what these women claim studies have shown that it is the belief that alcohol improves sex that makes all the difference than the alcohol itself.

Women who drink heavily cannot get aroused that easily and it takes a lot longer for them to get aroused and have orgasms. But when young women drink heavily, these women tend to have early sexual experiences and are known to have multiple partners after drinking and also unprotected sex.

When a woman drinks heavily she is known to become a victim of violence and sexual assault. Also the health problems which a woman who drinks heavily experiences are much more.

Some of the health problems which may result due to heavy drinking by women are Alcoholic Liver disease, brain disease, Cancer, and Heart Disease. More women who drink heavily are known to die from cirrhosis because of the development of alcoholic hepatitis which is liver inflammation.

Abuse of alcohol is known to cause loss in brain function, reducing the size of the brain, causing changes in the development and function of brain cells. And it is women who are found to be more vulnerable to diseases of the brain more than men due to alcohol.

Many studies and research have shown that alcohol consumption on a regular basis can cause breast cancer and cancer which is related to the digestive tract, head and neck. This becomes much more when women who drink also smoke. Heart attacks and cardiovascular diseases are likely to affect women who drink heavily.

Women should realize what drinking could do to their lives and thus stay away from alcohol as far as possible. Any woman who drinks more or rather heavily will find that

her problems at home, work, with friends and relatives and even with strangers get magnified.

This is because when under the influence of alcohol the woman would be more prone to have arguments with spouse or family members even on small issues, the relations between co workers at her office would become strained.

After a night of drinking she would turn up late for work which could later turn into a regular habit and result in her dismissal. She could also become a victim to violence and sexual assault because of her drinking habits.

Women who are above 55 years of age should be wary of their drinking habits if they have any. Many older women do not drink because of the fear of being labelled an alcoholic.

Women as they age also begin to use different types of medication for their various problems and drinking alcohol could react with their medication and this could lead to more severe health problems. Many older women take medication which can affect mood and thought like when they exhibit symptoms for anxiety and depression.

Alcohol when consumed with these medications can lead to serious problems and can be very harmful. Another factor that older women should take into consideration when they take a drink is their age.

Older people tend to reach higher levels of alcohol in their blood much faster than younger people and this is because as we age the amount of water in the body gets reduced to a greater level and the alcohol which is consumed gets more concentrated.

This is why when older people consume alcohol they will feel the effects much faster. Older people with long term drinking problems tend to react to treatment much slower than people who are short term drinkers.

What do you think are the reasons as to why women take to drinking? Well here are a few reasons which research studies have found. A woman tends to drink heavily if her parents or siblings are also heavy drinkers and have problems with alcohol.

If the spouse or partner of the woman tends to drink heavily than she would also resort to drinking. If she has a history of depression she would be found to be a

regular at a bar or pub. If she had been physically or sexually abused as a child then also she would resort to drinking to forget all that has happened to her.

Any woman who has alcohol related problems should seek medical help immediately as it could affect your personal relationships with family, at your work place, cause health problems and also with the law. Depending on the severity of the drinking problem a woman should undergo treatment.

Most women who are not alcohol dependent or who do not have any problems arising out of alcohol will find that they can reduce or stop their alcohol consumption much easily with less help.

Women who have severe drinking problems or who are habitual drinkers should make regular visits to their physicians or doctors and seek help. They should discuss their problems with their doctors and take timely help.

There are many health care providers who would make the woman see what alcohol can do to their lives and all the bad effects it can cause in the long run and why it is safer to stay away from it. These health care advisors would give ample advice so that women who are even moderate drinkers would slowly stop their drinking

How family members further the drinking habit

According to experts, problems arising in an alcoholic's family are usually cyclic. Unknowingly, the family members contribute towards furthering the drinking habit in the person suffering from the habit.

There are instances where the members of the family even encourage the drinker to go for his drinks rather than having to face other problems which arises when he is sober. They find that keeping the habit going is better than having to face more problems when the person is sober. Sometimes this actually becomes essential to keep the family together.

Denial is a major problem faced by the families affected by the habit of alcoholism. In the beginning even the members of the families try to deny and protect the drinker from social stigma. When they continue to do this, little do they realize how much they are harming the family member in the process.

Denial does not allow them to look for help at the right time thereby worsening the situation and creating a lot of emotional problems for the children. By denying the obvious, they only worsen the situation.



Members of the family of the drinker become dependent on each other and they tend to go into a shell. In order to protect the image of the family and maintain prestige and social image, they avoid bringing home friends. In due course of time, they tend to become loners themselves avoiding company altogether. They do all this in order to project an image that they are a perfect family leading a perfectly balanced life.

One sad aspect of all this is that the members of the drinker's family, especially the spouse at one stage finds that he or she does not have anything else in life other than to pay their attention to the alcoholic and keep trying to cure or control them. They keep spending all their time protecting their dependent and trying to keep them away from trouble caused due to their habit.

They are forced to lie to the drinker's office friends and boss and protecting their family image becomes top priority for them. They spend most of their time cooking up excuses for the alcoholic's behaviour.

There is still hope for such families. Organizations like the Alcoholics Anonymous are a boon to families facing problems related to alcoholism. The main thing is that the members of the family must accept firmly that there is a problem, a major one at that, and decide to go in for treatment.

They must do this in order to give themselves a chance to improve their lifestyles. Apart from the alcoholics anonymous, there are various other good family therapy

groups, marital therapy groups and self help groups which help these families come out of their misery.

One thing that has to be understood is that families of the alcoholics require treatment as much as the alcoholics themselves. Marriage counsellors, family counsellors and school counsellors should be sought to provide help. Every member of the family is affected by alcoholism.

Every one of them faces physiological, psychological and social problems due to the habit of drinking. Reaching out for help at the right time helps save all the members of the family come out of the misery and can put them on the road to recovery.

Treatment options

Alcoholism is more a disease of the mind. There is no medical treatment for this condition. However, alcoholism can be effectively treated with the help of various rehabilitation and support programs that are available. The only criterion to get treated for alcoholism is for the person affected to have a desire to come out of the habit. This is the first step towards freedom from the habit.

Social and family pressure can make an alcoholic give up drinking for a period of time, but it is generally not permanent. The alcoholic must thus decide to give up the habit voluntarily. Alcoholics who volunteer for treatment go through at least one set back before he completely gives up the habit of drinking.

The best thing an addicted person can do once he or she has decided to quit the habit is to join one of the many treatment centres. The strength and support that you will definitely need to quit the habit will be provided by these centres.

The path is very tedious but the goal is worth it. It is not very easy to come out of the habit which will let go of the alcoholic one minute and entice him the next. One minute the person will feel as if he or she is in complete control and the next minute denial will set in. The very feelings of guilt will lure them into going in for the drink.

Emotional upheaval will accompany physical craving and within no time the addict will be in a mess. The person looking to quit drinking therefore cannot do it on his or her own. They definitely need the strong support of one of these good de addiction clinics and treatment centres.

When the person under treatment is exposed to circumstances where he is offered a drink, he or she needs professional help to develop a mind strong enough to say no. There are a lot of professionals in all these centres who effectively guide the patients through situations like this helping them make the right decisions with a strong mind.

Various counselling sessions address such issues preparing the addict on how to effectively handle situations like this. Counselling can be individual, family or group related.

An addict can either admit himself in the clinic or receive treatment as an outpatient. Outpatient programs are helpful for people who have already undergone treatment and want the support of group therapies and counselling. It is very important for the addict to select a clinic or a program which is certified.

An alcoholic who is experiencing strong withdrawal symptoms needs to necessarily get himself admitted in the clinic as an inpatient. Initially drugs are administered to effectively deal with physical symptoms.

If the family of the addict is not supportive in his endeavour to give up drinking, it is a good idea to get himself admitted to the de addiction clinic and take the help of the counsellors and therapists there.

Alcohol treatment centres are a boon for alcoholics who are willing to make an effort to give up this undesirable habit. These centres also put the person on to various alcoholic anonymous groups nearby so the support and help can continue as long as he or she needs it.

Drug addiction Vs alcoholism

A lot of people argue that alcoholism is different from drug addiction. But then, it is almost the same. Where the drug addict is addicted to drugs the drinker is addicted to alcohol. Both of them are addicted to harmful substances affecting their health and lives and the lives of those around them. The consequences and effects of both are almost the same.

Treatments for both these conditions are also pretty identical. Even though there may be a difference in the medications prescribed for both these treatments, the underlying philosophy followed to treat both these addictions are the same.

The only difference between these two is that they consider each other the worse affected of the two. While the drug addict may claim that alcoholism is worse than his habit, the drinker is convinced that alcohol is any day better than being addicted to drugs.

Little do they realize that the mental state and condition which has led both of them towards undesirable addiction and habit is identical. Even their behaviour towards their family, society and themselves influenced by their respective habits is identical.

All the conditions resulting from their dreadful habits are also the same. These include low or no self esteem, failure in all their relationships, lying and being dishonest without any reason, feeling guilty or shameful for their behaviour and yet not able to control their actions, resentment towards happy people and families, denial, etc.

Both these conditions can be treated effectively with the co operation of the afflicted person. There are various organizations and social service networks at work constantly encouraging alcoholics and drug addicts to take treatment and make a move towards improving the quality of their lives.

Craving

According to some researchers craving is an urge which is like hunger or thirst. This results due to conditioning of the mind which gets activated by a familiar place like a bar or a party. Mind also starts craving due to mental depression and low moods of the person.

Under these familiar circumstances, the person starts craving for the drink just like when a person is hungry he partakes food or when he is thirsty he drinks water. Contrary to hunger and normal thirst, alcohol craving sets in along with symptoms which are similar to withdrawal symptoms thereby increasing the urge to reach out for the drink.

What happens is that under familiar circumstances, the person starts thinking of the pleasant and euphoric effects resulting from consumption of alcohol along with a certain kind of a discomfort associated with withdrawal from this habit.

Some of the responses of a person who has given up the habit if exposed to situations triggering his memory include salivation, a kind of a tingling in the skin surface, etc.

The person automatically extends his hand for that first drink when he starts experiencing these familiar withdrawal symptoms.

Relapse

Almost ninety percent of the drinkers relapse into the habit after giving it up completely according to studies. This relapse usually occurs within four years of completing treatment.

Relapse is attributed to factors like the person's unpredictability in going in for the first drink when he comes across a situation or when he is offered one and his inability to stop with one drink. Craving sets in once he or she takes a drink leading to a desire to continue with drinking.

Research is underway to analyze the reasons for relapse. Relapse is basically due to situations which the individual is conditioned to. Relapse can occur even if a person has been abstaining from alcohol for a long period of time.

Environment thus plays a major role in triggering memories and pushing a person towards a familiar habit. It is general assumption that addiction is a voluntary choice and that one has to be firm in using his or her will power to come out of the habit. This is not so.

When a person is addicted to alcohol there is a change in the brain chemistry of that person. This person cannot give up the habit easily without taking the help and support of rehabilitation centres. Very few alcohol addicts are able to give up this habit on their own without help.

The only way to effectively avoid relapse is for the patient to be firm in his mind that he will strictly follow the treatment methods and steps put forth by the treatment programs. They have to do this in order to successfully recover from their addiction on a long term basis.

There comes a time during the treatment for alcoholism when the person starts feeling better and free from withdrawal symptoms after a certain struggle with recovery in the early stages. What happens then is that the alcoholic starts feeling elated and enthusiastic thinking that his mind is now within his control and that he has successfully come out of the habit.

When the patient starts believing more in himself and lesser in the method of treatment that he or she has been following it is then that this over confidence takes a turn towards relapse. This is where the seed is planted and the relapse syndrome starts growing.

When they start feeling healthy and alright, the patients normally forget about the kind of suffering and pain they went through to arrive at this stage of their treatment. They strongly start believing that their treatment is over and forget about what an addict they were. They stop taking treatment on a daily basis which slowly starts turning them around towards a possible relapse.

At this stage, the person usually does not listen to anyone's suggestions to continue treatment. They start denying the very existence of their condition and rebel against any kind of treatment. Thus starts the process of relapse.

Treatment for relapse includes recognizing the symptoms or triggers of relapse in the patient. Monitoring the mood is very important and the patient is put through constant treatment and medication.

Contrary to normal people, an alcoholic is used to feelings of self pity. When such a person starts feeling good about themselves, they must strive to continue the process which has brought them to this point and not think that they have recovered and stop the treatment. This is where most of the addicts make the mistake.

What the patient must now do is to break their old habit of feeling sorry for themselves and establish a pattern which is healthy and positive. Continue on with the relapse prevention plan of the de addiction treatment and there is no looking back.

Naltrexone for alcoholism treatment

Recently, the drug Naltrexone has been known to treat people who are afflicted with the condition of alcoholism. Along with traditional treatment if taken, this drug has known to assist the alcoholic in overcoming his condition.

This drug though should not be taken by the alcoholics themselves or given to them by their family members. It has to be prescribed by a physician. This drug though is not very difficult to find in pharmacies.

Naltrexone works on that part of the brain which is involved in getting the person addicted to drugs and toxins. This drug has to be taken for a period of seven to ten days. The difference is felt after three to four days when the need for consumption of alcohol reduces in the body. Within a week or two the person will find that he can survive very well without consuming his drink.

One important thing to be noted though is that the moment the drug is stopped; the person may out of habit reach out for his drink. Therefore, it is very important to bring about sufficient lifestyle changes in order to balance out the treatment.

It is therefore advisable for a person starting on his naltrexone drug to be under the care of an experienced physician or a counsellor during and after his treatment duration.

Treating alcoholism with ondansetron

All medicines that are prescribed to treat the condition of excessive drinking work on lowering the level of serotonin in the brain. Lowering the serotonin level is an effective first step in people afflicted with a severe condition of alcoholism.

Ondansetron is a drug which is found to be very useful in treating alcoholism. This drug was originally used to treat nausea and vomiting. This drug according to researchers is found to be effective in de addiction treatment for younger people.

After extensive experimentation, it was concluded that the drug ondansetron was very effective in treating the condition of alcoholism as the addicts who were put on ondansetron were able to bring down their intake to about one and a half drinks. The results were more effective and successful with the younger addicts.

Ondansetron effectively blocks serotonin which is a neurotransmitter which in turn effectively blocks other neurotransmitters like dopamine. By blocking these chemicals which cause a person to reach out for his or her drinks, addiction can be effectively treated.

On the basis of the assumption that alcoholism is a biological phenomenon and is a disease which has to be treated, a lot of research is underway to invent new drugs and medicines to treat this condition. It is hopefully not very far away for that breakthrough discovery which will cure alcoholism once and for all.

Alternative treatment for alcohol abuse

Alternative treatment for alcoholism has gained in popularity in recent times. This treatment method involves combining both traditional and modern scientific methods of treatment for specific symptoms.

As opposed to treatment of other diseases alcoholism should be treated with extra care. Effort must be taken to create an environment which is free of stress, where the alcoholic must be placed for treatment.

Various rehabilitation centres around the world provide treatment targeting the whole life of the person in question rather than just the symptoms. This involves identifying the root cause of the addiction and eradicating the same.

Detox centres have therapeutic sessions where the patient is gently guided to open up his fears and concerns at the deepest level. This helps in identifying the root cause of the habit. A positive treatment plan is then worked out enabling the patient to come out of his habit and proceed towards leading a happy and healthy life.

Alcoholism can result from depression. In such cases treatment must involve a more intensive working on the mind of the person. Psycho therapeutic treatment programs are organized for these people which are an effective alternative treatment for this condition. This treatment works both at the addictive and emotional level of the patient.

Treatment at these centres also work on the family members of the patient. It is very important to educate the family on the treatment methods adopted and explain in detail about various negative approaches by them that could end in the relapse of this habit. The de addiction centres usually take the family members into confidence and treatment is provided with their support and assistance.

Spiritual guidance as a treatment option for the condition of alcoholism is also gaining in popularity. Spiritual belief can act as a major motivation for a person to give up his habit of drinking. Various meditation techniques taught by spiritual leaders of various organizations go a long way in helping addicts overcome stress and attain peace of mind thereby making it easier for them to give up their habit and start leading a peaceful and tranquil life.

Techniques include yoga, various types of meditations and trance. Meditation helps a person focus inwards thereby making the person drop his mind and become stress free and relaxed. When the person is happy and content with himself, he is no more affected by anything happening around him and he no longer needs anything addictive to feel happy, relaxed and peaceful.

A lot of people are going in for this kind of programs as they feel that meditation is any day better than medication. While medication is temporary, meditation gives one a permanent solution.

Trance work is also something similar to meditation. This helps the person focus his mind on contemplating deeper truths and provides the addict with great inner strength to help him overcome his temptations with relative ease.



Yoga which is very popular today is another effective treatment method for the condition of alcoholism. Yoga helps in effectively reducing stress and tension in a person and relieves him of anxiety. Yoga focuses on gentle stretching and brings about an effective harmony between the body and the mind.

Another alternative treatment which has been found to be effective is called the nutritional counselling. A lot of deficiencies related to nutrition arise due to excessive consumption of alcohol.

The body of alcoholic stops absorbing essential nutrients which helps the person in being healthy as his small intestine is no longer able to absorb the nutrients necessary. This is a consequence of filling up the system with alcoholic beverage.

Nutritional counselling can help after a person gives up the habit of drinking. Usually, he or she is evaluated for counselling and is advised on the diet to follow in order to get back to a healthy and strong life. This includes the balancing of the sugar level in the blood of the person who is on the road to recovery.

One more effective alternative treatment includes acupuncture. This has proved to be successful in many cases. Acupuncturists advise patients to take this as a support treatment along with other treatments.

Cognitive behaviour therapy

This therapy which is generally used in the treatment of phobias, anxiety, depression and other types of mental disorders is also found to be very effective in the treatment of alcoholism and drug abuse.

This therapy helps a person come out of the habit of drinking or drugs just like he or she got into it in the first place. This therapy uses similar mind conditioning which drove the person towards the habit to get them out of it.

Cognitive behaviour therapy is administered with the basic idea that the behaviour of a person is caused by his own mind and thoughts and not by anything which is outside himself like events, circumstances and people around.

A person can control the way he thinks about everything thereby not get affected by the changing circumstances and outside factors according to the cognitive behaviour therapists. By effectively treating a patient with this therapy, the person can be mentally prepared to deal with familiar situations and be strong enough to abstain from drinking.

Patients are thus taught how to forget what they have already conditioned to and learn healthier habits and skills.

The BAR Cycle

An alcoholic who is ready to make an effort to quit drinking usually goes to one of the various treatment centres. At these centres, they receive effective therapies which include medications combined with group and individual psychological sessions.

The twelve step treatment of the Alcoholic Anonymous is also incorporated along with other treatment methods to achieve good and effective results. By doing this the self esteem of the drinker is effectively boosted up and he or she becomes more confident and strong in dealing with situations.

The BAR cycle is one of the most popular motivation programs which helps in controlling behaviour of humans, especially the behaviour of addicts. This cycle is also used by many centres in treating people who are addicted to alcohol.

This cycle involves working on the strong belief of the individual which is centred on self loathing to be converted to a strong belief on self confidence. Boosting of self image is done by various techniques like incorporating positive attitudes, eliminating the negative attitudes, consciously behave positively, talking to oneself effectively, etc.

Doing this improves the addict's image of themselves thereby eliminating the need to depend on a drink in order to be happy and contented. The compulsion to drink slowly fades away leaving one clear in the mind and positive in his or her attitude and outlook.

The BAR cycle involves gently redirecting the person towards various other activities which creates a positive feeling and habits. Other work involves social activities or religious work which involves the church.

As the person spends days without having a drink and gets encouragement from everyone around regarding his voluntary work, he or she starts developing confidence and the self loathing is replaced by tremendous self confidence. Attitude transforms to being positive thereby strengthening the mind. This further makes it easier for the alcoholic to give up his habit.

For people who are seriously addicted to drinking, the BAR cycle is a must to remove negative feelings and be replaced with positive ones even as he or she goes on for professional treatment.

Herbal Remedies

There are a few simple remedies which can be followed at home to treat alcoholism. These remedies effectively reduce the effect of alcoholism. Effect of alcohol can be lowered effectively with the help of fruit juices.

Hangovers can be handled by drinking the juice of a lemon or orange. Apple and bananas help in bringing out the toxins from the body which may accumulate due to consumption of alcohol in excess.

The urge to drink can greatly be reduced by eating dates and grapes. A diet of only grapes for one whole week reduces the craving for drinking drastically. One way to reduce craving for alcohol is to take various other drinks in large quantities. Carrot juice is also an excellent drink which can reduce the person's urge to reach out for alcohol.

Antabuse

Treating alcoholics with antabuse was one of the first pharmaceutical treatments introduced. Taking antabuse during drinking creates unpleasant feelings and side effects. This negative reaction drives the person to give up the habit of drinking.

Alcohol when it enters the body is synthesized into acetaldehyde which is highly toxic. This acetaldehyde is further broken down into acetic acid which is comparatively milder and with no side effects.

The function of antabuse is to stop the acetaldehyde from further metabolising into acetic acid thereby creating an accumulation of this toxic substance in the body of the drinker. This creates a lot of unpleasant feelings and disturbances in the body thereby forcing the person to give up his drinking habit.

Symptoms produced by antabuse includes vomiting, sweating, severe throbbing and headaches, neck pain, difficulty in breathing, pain in the chest, flushed feeling, nausea, dyspnoea and palpitations. Other symptoms include uneasiness all the time, blurring in the vision, a confused feeling, hypotension, tachycardia, weakness, etc.

Apart from these milder symptoms a person may also experience heart failure, become unconscious, convulsions, depression in the respiratory system and sometime even collapse and death.

This makes it extremely important for the person who is going to be taking this drug to be aware of its implications and he must want to give up the habit of drinking. This drug must never be given to a person who is not aware of it. This may result in very serious complications.

If a person already has a defective heart, he should not be prescribed this medication. All aspects should be carefully considered before going in for this drug. Pregnant women should keep away from this drug.

Research shows that using this drug on a long term is quite effective. Practically speaking, the moment the drug is discontinued, the person goes back to the habit of drinking. This drug thus does not cure one of the symptoms of craving or any other withdrawal symptoms.

The person's cooperation and regularity in taking the medicine is very essential for effective treatment of the condition. This drug must be continued on a long term basis for positive results.

Campral

Campral is basically acamprosate calcium. This medication has gained in popularity recently especially in the United States for treatment for alcoholism. In Europe this medicine has been in use for quite some time now.

What campral actually does is that it balances and replaces certain chemicals in the brain which had been disturbed due to alcohol abuse. This helps people keep away from alcohol as their brains start functioning normally. Campral is also very effective for treatment of withdrawal symptoms. It relieves drinkers from extreme discomfort and emotional upheaval during his or her withdrawal period.

Campral is a time release capsule which comes in a concentration of 333 mg. This medicine is prescribed to be taken thrice a day. People suffering from other ailments need to adjust their dosage after consulting their physician. Being a time release capsule, campral should only be swallowed whole and should not be broken or crushed at any cost.

Duration of medication is usually twelve months as this tablet is not addictive and its side effects are very mild. Side effects include dry mouth, headache, itching, loss of appetite, sweating, insomnia, diarrhoea, dizziness, etc.

Very rarely do people taking campral experience severe side effects like feeling nervous and anxious, feeling a tingling sensation in their arms and feet, feeling depressed and suicidal, urinating less often, experiencing pain in the chest, etc.

This medication should be taken by people who have given up the habit of drinking. It does not work for people who are drinking in the sly or continue to drink in public. If a person is suffering from any kind of a kidney disease, has suicidal tendencies, has an allergy to sulphites, is pregnant or breastfeeding, etc he or she should not take campral to treat the condition of alcoholism.

Campral is more effective when taken combined with other forms of treatments like therapies, counselling, etc. Like every other drug, campral is more successful and effective in some than in others.

Topiramate or Topamax

Topiramate even in small dosages is found to have a positive effect on an alcoholic even if he is a heavy drinker. This drug is derived from sugar monosaccharide D-fructose which occurs naturally. It has a positive impact on alcoholics who want to give up the habit and abstain from drinking.

This drug reduces the effect of dopamine thereby providing no pleasure to the person who is drinking alcohol. This enables the person to give up the habit as it is no longer intoxicating. This is the only one of the several medications available which is effective for people who are still drinking.

Sodium Oxybate

Being a sodium salt of gamma hydroxybutyric acid or GHB, this drug is generally used for detoxification over a period of time. Sodium Oxybate is also used to treat withdrawal symptoms. This drug acts by way of enhancing GABA neurotransmission. It also thereby reduces the level of glutamate. This drug is popularly used in Italy.

Handling withdrawal symptoms

Almost everyone who is attempting to give up drinking experiences withdrawal symptoms. Severity of the symptoms depends on the person. About five percent of them who experience severe symptoms need to admit themselves into the detox clinics or hospitals.

Treatment involves admitting the patient in the facility and observing them for a certain period of time. The body temperature, rate of heartbeat, breathing, blood pressure, etc of the patient is carefully monitored. Fluid levels are also checked periodically.

Sometimes alcoholics experience very severe withdrawal symptoms. These symptoms can even become life threatening. In such cases, the patient is administered sedatives. Dosage varies according to severity of the symptoms.

Patients are given tranquilizers like benzodiazepines or valium for at least one to two weeks to go through the withdrawal symptoms. The drying out period when alcohol is strictly kept away from patients is monitored closely by the physician for symptoms of DT or delirium tremens.

Antipsychotic medicines are given for people who experience symptoms like hallucinations related to alcohol withdrawal symptoms. Withdrawal symptoms, though unavoidable when one is trying to give up the habit can be effectively treated and managed. If symptoms are severe like sweating, tremors, seizures, convulsions, anxiety and nausea, it is better to go to the detox centres for treatment.

Some people are so scared of withdrawal symptoms that they decide consuming alcohol is better than facing these symptoms. Such people generally would have tried to withdraw from the habit on their own and found it impossible to handle symptoms of withdrawal. Such people usually go back to their drinking habit or take the help of other harmful drugs.

Managing withdrawal symptoms with the help of medicines is called alcohol detox. This process effectively helps the person to stay abstained from their drinking habit. Alcohol detox is not very painful. This detox program has to be undergone in a medically controlled environment which can be in any of the alcohol rehab programs. These clinics administer medications which are effective in reducing and eliminating the symptoms related to withdrawal from alcohol.

Common symptoms

Stopping consumption of alcohol all of a sudden produces certain symptoms in the body of an individual. Withdrawal symptoms are very common in people who give up drinking after they have been consuming alcohol for a prolonged period of time or if they have been drinking heavily.

Symptoms may be mild or severe. Reactions may be on the psychological level or the physical level. Psychological reactions include feeling anxious, irritable and depressed, feeling tired all the time, feeling of confusion and having unpleasant dreams, experiencing volatile reactions and feelings, feeling shaky and nervous all the time, etc.

Physical symptoms may include nausea and vomiting, less or no appetite, difficulty in sleeping, looking pale, sweating profusely especially on the face and in the palms, experiencing frequent pulsating headaches, etc. Palpitations and tremors are also experienced by some people.

When a person experiences severe symptoms he starts frequently hallucinating and goes into a delirious state, is always afflicted with convulsions, fever and blackouts and is generally in an agitated state of mind.

The more chemically dependent the person is the more withdrawal symptoms he goes through. Such a person requires professional help in order to overcome the symptoms.

When a person is drunk, he or she takes an oath that they are never going to drink again. When the oath is taken, the person is usually sincere in intentions. But as time goes and craving sets in, suffering starts driving them towards their drinks again. The body of the drinker starts demanding for the drink and the pain the person experiences makes it impossible for him or her to abstain any more from reaching out for the bottle.

There are situations where a person is experiencing severe withdrawal symptoms and is unable to drink due to various reasons. Such situations can sometimes become a threat to their lives if unattended to.

Severity as mentioned earlier depends on how much the person is chemically dependent. Mild symptoms can result in shakes or sweating, headache, anxiety attacks, etc. Though these symptoms are unpleasant for the person concerned they do not pose a threat to the drinker. These symptoms can be managed much easier by one who is sincere in his or her intentions to quit than the more severe ones.

If a person is a heavy drinker or has been drinking for a prolonged period of time, quitting alcohol consumption can result in hallucinations. Hallucinations set in around six to forty eight hours after he or she stops drinking. Hallucinations may be either

visual or can involve smell and sound. Duration of these attacks can be anywhere between a few hours to a few weeks.

If withdrawal symptoms are severe, it can result in seizures and convulsions and this can become a life threatening condition which has to be attended to immediately. The person may become delirious on being kept away from alcohol for a period of three to five days.

During the Delirium Tremens or DT, the person suffering can go in for grand mal seizures, stroke and heart attacks and there is no way the progression of the condition can be stopped. Result in such cases is usually fatal.

Alcoholics looking to quit the habit have to go in for a proper medical treatment to handle these symptoms. Alcoholics who are only mild dependent can handle withdrawal symptoms effectively with the help of vitamins like Thiamin and a controlled diet.

A person who is severely dependent has to go to a physician for help and medication. Physicians usually prescribe valium for such patients as a replacement to alcohol and wean him or her slowly away from the drug. The important thing about all these treatments is that the patient in question has to approach for help and not try to handle withdrawal symptoms on his own.

Treatment procedure for withdrawal symptoms

People who experience severe withdrawal symptoms have to get themselves admitted in hospitals or one of the various treatment facilities. It is easier to withdraw from the habit of drinking and handle the symptoms by reaching out to medical help which can be the family physician, emergency room, health care provider or urgent care centre.

When the patient is admitted to the facility, he or she is assessed for his condition. Depending on how mild or severe the withdrawal symptoms are, treatment method is worked out. Steps usually include treating of immediate symptoms of withdrawal, monitoring for any complications and starting the patient on preventive therapy.

The patient is kept back at the facility for a certain period of time in order to monitor his heart rate, blood pressure, temperature, fluid levels and electrolyte levels. If left unattended a patient who is experiencing severe withdrawal symptoms may rapidly progress to a worse state which may even become life threatening or fatal.

Such people are administered with drugs which depress their central nervous system. These drugs are the sedatives which help in reducing the symptoms to a certain extent. This state of sedation is maintained for about a week or more according to what is required by the patient.

One of the drugs commonly prescribed for sedations is valium which belongs to the Benzodiazepines class of medications. These drugs act on the nerve cell of the patient and inhibit the excited condition of these cells. This results in a calming effect on the patient's mind and he remains in a state of sedation and drowsiness.

Diazepam is another medicine used for sedating patients. This drug acts for a longer time. Doctor may decide to give the initial dose intravenously followed by doses of the medicine every two hours until the withdrawal symptoms subside. This drug causes heavy sedation effect in the patients.

Using drugs over a long period of time cause certain side effects like drowsiness in the daytime, and a feeling of hang over. The patient may experience respiratory problems and weight gain due to overeating.

During the period commonly referred to as the drying out period, the patient is strictly kept away from alcohol and is watched for the severity of withdrawal symptoms and is monitored for on setting of a condition called delirium tremens. If hallucinations occur independent of other conditions, patient is then treated with antipsychotic medications and is usually hospitalized.

During hospitalization, the patient is also tested and treated for other conditions which may have resulted from consumption of alcohol. These conditions include liver diseases, heart disorders, clotting of blood, brain disorders like Wernicke Korsakoff Syndrome, alcoholic neuropathy, malnutrition, etc.

Rehabilitation is then recommended and the patient is sent for group and individual counselling sessions, therapy sessions, medications, etc.

Including family in the therapy

Family therapy includes assessing the reaction of the family members towards typical behaviour of the alcoholic. This therapy aims to shift the focus of family members towards their reactions shifting their attention away from the negative traits of the person who drinks.

This therapy helps family members assess various situations where they can react better. A positive attitude towards various situations and circumstances are inculcated in the member thereby creating a situation conducive for the addict to start his journey on giving up his or her habit.

This therapy shifts the paradigm of the family member by breaking his role playing nature which is typical and providing an opportunity to react in a different manner which can produce positive results.

For example if the man of the house comes home late in the night drunk and just passes out on the lawn or the front step, the best thing the wife can do is to go about her duties with a pleasant and calm demeanour and greet him enthusiastically when he wakes up and comes inside the house.

When she does this, there is nothing whatsoever the man has to face other than his own guilt and embarrassment. This is a very effective way of dealing with the situation and it induces a feeling of shame and remorse in the man.

In situations like this, if the woman starts blaming the man focus shifts to her behaviour and what he has done takes a back seat. The main thing here is to keep his focus on his behaviour enough for him to see how wrong his actions are. Doing this on a regular basis will definitely put him on the path to recovery from his condition.

It is very important to include the family and counsel them as a part of the treatment procedure. If the family handles the pressure and reacts in a proper and positive manner, half the problem is solved. The entire family has to be trained on how not to react negatively to an alcoholic's behaviour and be matter of fact in any kind of an embarrassing situation.

Helping the alcoholic focus on only his problem and his reactions will hasten the process of self assessment and he or she will definitely reach out for help very soon.

Treating hangover

Drinkers can effectively prevent hangover by following certain tips. Drinking slowly and steadily especially on a full stomach will reduce possible hangover symptoms. One thing a person has to remember is that a smaller person will be affected more than a relatively larger person.

Moderate drinking helps in keeping hangover symptoms under control. If a person drinks water between his drinks, it helps to dilute the effect of alcohol in the system thereby reducing hangover symptoms. It goes without saying that the best way to prevent hangover is to avoid drinking altogether.

If you are affected by hangover, it can be treated by consuming food which contains fructose. This will enable the alcohol in the body to be burnt faster than usual. A person suffering from hangover has to necessarily eat well. Hangovers disappear generally in twenty four hours with proper rest.

Myths and truth about alcoholism

One myth is that beer does not produce as much intoxication in a person as other alcoholic beverages. Fact is that twelve ounce of beer produces as much of an intoxication as four ounce of wine.

The second myth states that switching between different alcoholic drinks makes a person more drunk. This is also false. Mixing drinks may sometimes lead to an upset stomach but does not have any effect on the intoxicated state of the person.

The third myth says that a person who is very high can be made sober by giving him a cold shower, a cup of hot coffee or taking him to the fresh air. Fact is that all this does not really help. Only time brings down the level of alcohol in the system of a person.

According to the fourth myth, if a person eats well before he starts drinking he will remain sober and will not get high. The fact remains that a person gets drunk depending on the amount of alcohol he consumes. The only thing that may happen is that he may take a little longer to get high but he definitely will.

Another myth states that alcohol affects everyone in the same manner and to the same extent. The fact remains that there are a lot of factors like metabolism, gender of a person; body chemistry of a person, weight of the person, etc has an effect on how the person reacts to alcohol in his system.

Alcoholics anonymous

Alcoholics anonymous is a group of people from all over the world who have joined hands to help each other quit alcoholism and also help other people who may be suffering from similar problems of drinking.

The feeling of togetherness is a great support for these people and it enables them to come out of the habit and stay sober. Fellows of alcoholic anonymous help new members to stay away from alcohol gently guiding them to abstain from the habit one day at a time.

Newcomers are then introduced to AAs twelve step recovery program in order to strengthen their minds. This speeds up their recovery. The support and friendship of the other members of AA helps in curing the new members effectively. Alcoholics anonymous have regular meetings where the members exchange their experiences and views with each other.

AA's Twelve Steps for recovery

1. Admitting to oneself that he or she has a problem with alcohol which requires professional help
2. Firmly believing in a higher power which can help cure the condition
3. Decide to surrender everything to the power of God including our will.
4. Analyzing and assessing ourselves honestly
5. Admitting the results of our assessment to someone other than ourselves and to God.
6. Ready to allow God to work on removing our imperfections
7. Asking God to intervene and help us with our endeavour to become perfect.
8. Thinking of all the people we have hurt or harmed in some way or the other and trying our best to make up to them.
9. Directly approaching these people and making up with them.

10. Self assessment as a continuous process and making it a habit to admit our wrongs immediately.
11. Pray and consciously meditate in order to merge with the cosmic consciousness or God.
12. Once having attained an exalted spiritual feeling by following these steps, spread the message among others who need help and guidance.

Happy family

