



Note 1 – Alcohol dependency

The symptoms of alcohol dependence include:

- Unable to keep a drink limit.
- Increased tolerance to alcohol. However, in the later stages of alcohol dependence, there may be a decreased tolerance to alcohol as a result of liver and central nervous system damage.
- Difficulty in getting drunk.
- Spending a considerable time drinking.
- Organising the day around drinking.
- Missing meals.

Note 2 - Cognitive impairment and dementia

- Damage to the brain occurs, especially the frontal lobe. This results in loss of memory, deterioration of personality and loss of intellectual ability. Interpersonal skills, attendance to usual interests and responsibilities may deteriorate and self-neglect may result.
- Depression caused by a direct effect of alcohol on the brain and exacerbated by social problems that include unemployment, divorce and debt. There is an increased incidence of deliberate self-harm. The suicide rate is increased six fold in people who are dependent upon alcohol.
- Anxiety. People often use alcohol to relieve symptoms of stress and anxiety. However, anxiety symptoms increase during periods of withdrawal, leading to a cycle of increased consumption.
- Psychosis. Alcoholic hallucinosis is a rare condition that is not due to alcohol withdrawal. Auditory hallucinations, often derogatory, develop in an otherwise clear consciousness. The condition usually lasts for a few days, but can persist after several months of abstinence.

Note 3 - Wernicke Korsakoff syndrome

- This is caused by vitamin B deficiency, which may persist after abstinence from alcohol and vitamin replacement.
- Wernicke's Disease results in unsteadiness, paralysis of eye movement and confusion.
- Korsakoff Syndrome resulting in severe amnesia for recent events with confabulation

Note 4 - Hepatic encephalopathy

- This can be acute or chronic.
- Acute - There is sudden onset of drowsiness and coma, usually with a precipitating cause [examples include constipation or infection].
- Chronic - There is disorder of personality, mood and intellect. The course may be fluctuating. The person is irritable, confused, disorientated and has slow slurred speech.