

Alcohol FAQs.

Type of Drug

Sedative-anesthetic

Systemic Effects

Alcohol is a drug that, like sedatives, depresses the central nervous system.

Creation

Produced by fermenting process involving natural ingredients (being sugar and making yeast spores)

Street Names

Liquor, cocktails, spirits, booze

Appearance

Ethyl alcohol, the psychoactive ingredient in beer, wine, and distilled liquor, is a colorless liquid with a strong, distinctive smell.

Delivery Method

Alcohol is typically ingested orally, in liquid form as follows:

- **Beer, which is less than ten percent alcohol in content, is consumed orally.**
- **Wine, which also is less than ten percent alcohol, is drunk, sometimes in combination with non-alcoholic drinks.**
- **Distilled liquor, with an alcohol content usually more than 40 percent, also is drunk, and often is mixed with soft drinks, fruit juices, or water.**
- **Some cooking recipes include alcohol as an ingredient.**

Other Forms

Besides its use for drinking and cooking, other forms of alcohol are used as ingredients in medicine, solvents, preservatives, and cleaning agents, and for a wide range of other purposes.

Psychological Effects

- **Appears initially to act as a stimulant, invigorating thought and activity.**
- **Produces feelings of relaxation, reduced anxiety, and mild euphoria. Induces, as consumption increases, progressive stages of sedation, anesthesia, and in very large quantities, coma.**
- **Causes intoxication, dependence, and tolerance.**
- **Causes reddening of the whites of the eyes.**
- **Reduces rapid eye movement (visual range, perception and reactions). Induces sleep.**
- **Impedes the function of the portions of the brain that affect self-control. Impedes memory by disrupting transfer of recent memory to long-term storage banks.**

Dangers

Alcohol has different effects on people, depending on a wide range of physical, mental, and environmental circumstances. For most people, alcohol acts as a sedative. The common physical and mental responses to alcohol abuse are:

- Physical and psychological dependency.
- Impaired coordination, responses, attention, tracking, and judgment.
- Drowsiness or loss of consciousness.
- Fatal respiratory or heart failure caused by large quantities being consumed in a short time period.
- Toxic or inflammatory damage to the liver, heart, pancreas, and gastrointestinal tract caused by excessive and continuous consumption; severe damage to the brain and nervous system also may be caused by excessive and continuous consumption. Increased susceptibility to disease.
- Malnutrition.
- Cancer of the mouth, larynx, esophagus, and liver. Increased likelihood of injury or death resulting from vehicle accidents due to the detrimental effect of alcohol consumption on driving and other skilled tasks.
- Distinct withdrawal syndrome, including delirium tremors, the stages of which are progressively traumatic and painful, and even fatal.
- Especially dangerous when used in combination with other drugs, especially barbiturates.
- Also especially dangerous for pregnant women because of spontaneous abortions, birth defects, or physical and mental retardation (also known as fetal alcohol syndrome).

Comments

Alcohol plays an important cultural and social role in our society. In moderation, its use can be safe and appropriate. Used in excess, alcohol can and does destroy lives. According to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD), approximately 17.7 million Americans have the disease of alcoholism. Nearly 150 million Americans drink alcohol at least occasionally.

Workplace Impact

There is a major impact on employers because alcohol abuse is so common and so socially accepted... the fine line that exists between social drinkers and problem drinkers may obscure the extent of the alcohol abuse problem. As much as 11.9 percent of the work force abuses alcohol. The NCADD also estimates that alcohol abuse costs the nation, including employers, \$85.8 billion.

Conclusion

Alcoholism is a disease marked by continued excessive or compulsive use of alcohol. An alcoholic is a person who loses the ability to determine how much alcohol is "too much". If a person lacks the self control not to drink or to stop drinking, that person is dependent on alcohol.