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## *Take Control of ALCOHOL*

By Claire Nash

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## **Please Read This **FIRST****

This book is a lay-person's overview of a complex and important subject, based on the author's experience and research.

You must consult a qualified medical practitioner about any questions or concerns which you have about this subject. They know you and also have access to the latest research and assistance.

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## **Part-I: Introduction**

### **1. Alcoholism - An Overview**

Alcoholism is the cause of death of about 100,000 people a year in the U.S.A..

The U.S.A. Federal Government spends around \$166 billion on the indirect and direct health costs of alcoholism.

The health of up to half of the adult U.S. population is affected by alcohol, causing it to be a leading factor affecting the health of the nation.

Alcohol lowers our body's resistance and immune system, so alcoholics contract infections like bacterial pneumonia relatively easily and this leads to more complex, dangerous and expensive medical problems.

Alcoholism is dependence on alcohol consumption along with an uncontrollable desire for alcohol which leads to serious physical, emotional, and social problems.

Alcoholism does not have one definite cause. Contributing factors include;

- Affluence
- Easy availability of alcohol
- Social and peer pressures and
- Emotional disturbances.

The negative effects of alcohol can include extensive damage to your body's organs, including your heart, liver, kidney and brain to the point of causing death.

Alcoholism is also a major factor in serious motor vehicle accidents, relationship problems and break-ups, assaults and even suicide.

Alcoholism is on the rise among teenagers and even younger children. They see drinking alcohol as a way to acceptance with their peers and fear alienation from their friends if they don't 'join in'.

Dependence on alcohol is extremely dangerous because it reduces the person's self control and is a major cause of;

- x broken homes and relationships
- x financial setbacks due to loss of employment
- x stealing to get money for alcohol
- x irresponsible driving causing serious accidents and
- x loss of self-respect and esteem with friends and colleagues.

But there are many valuable treatments and ways to reduce the ongoing effects and dependence on alcohol. Improvements do not come easily; withdrawal periods are stressful and difficult for the alcoholic and immediate family members.

Treatments include detoxification programs with group counselling and psychotherapy for combating psychological issues and physical ailments. Different therapies supervised by experienced medical practitioners like



nutritional therapy, aversion therapy and regulated abstinence programming can turn around the lives of alcoholics and give them back their families and friends.

Children of alcoholic parents experience serious trauma and sometimes grow up to be very rebellious. They may suffer from several abnormal conditions after they grow up. Such children have Adult Children of Alcoholics Syndrome.

Alcoholics who quit taking alcohol are recovering alcoholics and must focus on retaining their control over the temptation of alcohol which is everywhere in modern society.

Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon are two of the most well-known and respected philanthropic organizations which contribute to the welfare and well-being of alcoholics, their children, and families. They support rehabilitation programs and offer moral support in times of extreme crisis. Most members of such associations are past alcoholics so they are best able to understand and visualize traumas and agonies of alcoholism.

Some ways to counteract the growing tide of alcoholism is through social education of the whole population, limiting advertisements especially those that might be particularly attractive to very young people, increasing the cost of products that contain alcohol and extensive involvement of federal organizations to curb and reduce alcoholism.

## **2. Is Alcoholism a Disease or a Vice?**

Alcoholism is an uncontrolled desire to drink alcohol. Some life experiences which may increase the attraction include emotional setbacks, physical disabilities, habits or pressure to conform with the accepted practices of your colleagues and friends or people you want to socialize with.

Whatever be the reason, drinking alcohol beyond permissible limits is alcoholism. So, what are permissible limits? There cannot be just one set limit for everyone – we're individuals.

Many medical experts define alcoholism as a psychological abnormality or physiological disease in a person. If it is a psychological shortcoming, you can control your addiction largely but not if it is any physiological deficiency. Other research presents alcoholism tries to differentiate between people who drink heavily to overcome past or present emotional problems and those who drink due to a genetic disorder with the latter said to be suffering from symptoms of alcoholism disease. And there are many further variations.

### **Medical Terminology of Alcoholism**

There is no single universal definition of alcoholism accepted right across medical circles. You cannot take a blood test to determine your alcoholic tendencies. Blood tests only indicate alcohol levels in your blood and not your inclination to consume alcohol.

Different medical professionals and researchers favor various yardsticks to diagnose alcoholism in individuals. Medical practitioners diagnose you as an alcoholic according to the defining symptoms which they, based on their

experience and research, believe are most significant indicators of alcoholism, such as the presence of diagnosable physical diseases which are known to be due to consumption of alcohol like cirrhosis of liver, etc.

To understand alcoholism, you need to know the views of both camps; those to whom alcoholism is a disease and the other, equally respected researchers and practitioners, who believe that alcoholism is not a disease.

### **One View; 'Alcoholism is a disease'**

The supporters of this view portray alcoholism as a genetic disorder in some persons whom, they say, can consume liquor in larger quantities with higher tolerance levels in the initial stages. After a certain point, the patient's tolerance levels fall drastically.

Drinking becomes a habit which brings serious problems into their lives. These practitioners believe that the result is likely to be death or lunacy. The American Medical Association (AMA) also views alcoholism as a disease because it satisfies all the determining criteria of disease-symptoms; persistent, progressive, treatable, and with a strong chance of relapse.

The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence and the American Society of Addiction Medicine also fully support this definition and argument.

### **The Other View; 'Alcoholism is not a disease, but a vice'**

Supporters of this view questioning the meaning of word 'disease' itself. 'Disease is a pathological condition of a part, organ, or system of an organism resulting from various causes, such as infection, genetic defect, or environmental stress, and characterized by an identifiable group of signs or

symptoms' according to The American Heritage Dictionary. However, even the common cold does not fall under this definition of disease. A layman can immediately understand meaning, implications, and effects of a disease such as cancer. But, the same man cannot be clear about alcoholism.

Alcoholism refers to unacceptable levels of drinking and lacks any identifiable characteristics which are common to every person that suffers from it. It will affect your family and your behavioral patterns but they will not be identical in degree or effect with the experiences of other people who are affected by alcohol. While it is believed that you can control the extent and some effects of alcoholism through your actions, the occurrence and impact of other diseases are due to genetic or environmental factors over which you cannot exercise much, if any, control.

While there is such a wide division of opinion among experienced researchers and practitioners in this area, it is best to not let ourselves be side-tracked by theories and just concentrate on measures to combat alcoholism as it affects us or those close to us.

## **Part-II: Understanding Alcoholism**

### **3. What is Alcoholism?**

It is difficult to define alcoholism. The term is used for both dependence on alcohol and the abuse of alcohol.

It causes many unfavorable and difficult situations and consequences. A publication of the American Psychiatric Association, 'Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders', defines alcoholism as incorrect usage of alcohol.

Alcoholism is sometimes referred to as problem drinking - drinking more than is safe, such as half a dozen drinks in a short period or drinking before driving.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) defines alcoholism much the same - 'A disease that includes alcohol craving and continued drinking despite repeated alcohol-related problems, such as losing a job or getting into trouble with the law.' Alcoholism is a chronic disorder involving consuming high levels of alcoholic beverages than we can handle.

It leads to total disruption of all relationships, responsibilities, and health. Unsafe intake of alcohol leads to further problems - alcohol dependence and alcohol abuse. Alcohol intake is like abuse of any other drug - heroin, cocaine, marijuana, sedatives, nicotine and anti-anxiety drugs.

Such alcoholic tendencies are reported to be higher in males than in females.

### ***Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse - Are they different?***

Alcoholism is a dependence on alcohol, a lack of control on drinking and abnormal craving for alcohol at any cost and all times. Alcohol abuse is a part of the process of alcoholism, leading to serious health and relationship problems.

### **Causes of Alcoholism**

There is no single cause for alcoholism.

- Alcoholic parents may increase the chance that their children could abuse alcohol.
- Some scientists report research which may indicate genetic causes for alcoholism but, at this point, cannot pinpoint any particular gene or its influence on alcoholism.
- Psychological factors like depression, conflicts in relationships, seeking relief from anxiety and tension and low self-esteem push some people toward alcoholism.
- Social contributors include easy availability and acceptance of alcohol consumption, lifestyles and peer pressure.

### **Consequences of Alcoholism**

Alcoholism, like drug addiction, has far-reaching consequences on every sphere of human life.

### *Physical consequences*

Alcoholism gradually attacks all body systems, crippling their functioning. It affects the nervous system of your body leading to increased levels of normal emotions like tension, anxiety and inhibitions. It destroys inner lining of gastrointestinal tracts and stomach causing vomiting, nausea and bleeding.

Many sufferers have memory blackouts, unstable walking and impaired sense of balance. You lose your ability to judge or concentrate on anything.

Your body cannot absorb vitamins properly, leading to poor levels of essential nutrients in your body. The liver and pancreas suffer immense damage and alcoholic hepatitis and cirrhosis are often the result.

Heart functioning becomes irregular and the incidence of high blood pressure, clotting disorders, heart attacks, anemia, low blood sugar levels, and high fat content in the blood is markedly increased.

Sexual dysfunction, leading to cessation of menstruation in women and erectile dysfunction in men, is another consequence.

Alcohol consumption in pregnant women is believed to lead to malformation of the fetus with several behavioral problems, some of which are life-long impairments.

Severe alcoholism can lead to muscular malfunctioning and cancer in vital organs with severe, even fatal, consequences.

### *Social Consequences*

Social consequences of alcoholism include unemployment, problems at home, souring of all relationships at all levels, higher incidence of traffic fatalities and other problems with police and other authorities.

Alcoholism can be a major factor in violent crimes, date rape, child abuse and teen pregnancy. It also causes immense havoc in the lives of your loved ones.

The alcoholic completely disassociates themselves from the real world.



## 4. Stages of Alcoholism

Alcoholism is a self-inflicted illness, which affects people everywhere without regard to language, sex, creed, education, religion, or caste. It is usually slow in the early stages but a negative outcome is inevitable unless strong action is taken by the sufferer and those around them. However, denial is a symptom common to all sufferers and must be overcome for recovery to be possible and lasting.

Alcoholism sets in when occasional drinking becomes a habit. Prolonged drinking causes resentment and unhappiness all around and can ruin you totally.

Alcoholism normally passes through four stages with specific symptoms. Denial is prevalent in all the stages.

### First Stage

The initial stage is where you are amazed at the quantity of alcohol you can consume. That is often more than your friends and companions and leads you to boast about your capacity. When you drink to excess, you imagine yourself to be wealthy, go on careless spending sprees and are carefree in showing off your achievements.

### *Symptoms*

1. Drinking "to relax".
2. Drinking to relieve you of all tension, stress or mental fatigue.

3. Emptying all available bottles and cans to avoid wastage.
4. Always on the lookout for opportunities to drink.
5. Gradual increase in the quantity you can and do drink.

## **Second Stage**

This is still an early part of alcoholism. You can mend your ways but **only if you choose to do so**. However, you are at crossroads and you need a strong mind and body to pull yourself back.

### ***Symptoms***

1. Frequent blackouts, similar to amnesia, occur during drinking sessions. Although you are normal, you cannot later recall anything about what you said or did - or even places you visited. This is not connected with loss of consciousness.
2. You swallow your first couple of drinks very quickly.
3. You drink extra alcohol 'on the sly' at parties and social gatherings or have a few gulps before or during events without the knowledge of others there.
4. You seem to develop an inner feeling of guilt about your drinking habits and you avoid any discussion about drinks or drinking.

## **Third Stage**

This stage is the beginning of full addiction. You lose control over your drinking. Until now, you could stop whenever you wanted to. Now, it is very much harder – even impossible, although you started with an intention to just have a few drinks. **This is the dangerous stage leading to total defeat.**

### ***Symptoms***

1. Making excuses for your increased and frequent drinking.
2. Inability to control your drinking.
3. Avoiding meeting family, friends and close colleagues as you are unable to honor your repeated promises to them that you would quit drinking.
4. Aggressive behavior.
5. Neglecting food, increasing the damage to your body and general health.
6. Losing interest in work, causing employment and money problems.
7. Acute necessity to have early morning drinks and lowered tolerance of alcohol.

## **Fourth Stage**

**This is the final stage.**

Until now, you could choose to start or not start with the first drink. Now you cannot stop drinking.

You must drink. Until this chronic stage, you might manage your job and other commitments.

Now, you drink through all your waking hours. Hangovers are persistent and pronounced. You cannot start even one day without a drink and time-keeping is poor, so your morning may begin at any odd hour.

### *Symptoms*

1. Drinking mania with long periods of intoxication.
2. Deterioration of moral values with lack of logical thinking.
3. Indescribable fears. vague feelings and thoughts.
4. Long hours of total blackout.

Alcoholism may not necessarily follow the given order but inevitably leads to death or serious impairment without proper medical attention and rehabilitation.

## **5. How Alcoholism Affects Your Body**

Scientific evidence indicates moderate drinking of one to two drinks a day may be beneficial to your cardiovascular system. All the positive effects are completely eroded with heavy and uncontrollable drinking; which creates total turmoil and disruption of the normal, essential biological activities of your body.

Alcoholism develops gradually over your lifetime. There are different categories of alcoholics, some drink occasionally but binge heavily while others drink regularly and habitually – chronic drinkers.

Drinking can become an integral part of your life over a period and you get to the dangerous stage where you cannot live without drinking. You tell yourself that drinking is the only solution to all your problems.

But all drinking, even a moderate intake has some impact on your physical and mental condition. Complications develop gradually as you start to drink more and this will create adverse situations which can lead to serious, even fatal consequences, depending on your general health.

### **Effects of Alcoholism**

Effects of alcoholism can be short-term or long-term.

### ***Short-term Effects***

Alcohol produces a feeling of depression and numbs physical and emotional pain. Alcohol enters the blood directly and easily percolates its way to your brain, producing equal alcohol levels in your brain and blood.

Short-term effects of alcohol can include -

- Hazy and blurred vision coupled with an inadequate sense of hearing.
- Impaired sense of balance, leading to shaky steps and general difficulty in walking.
- Improper coordination of different parts of your body leading to physical injuries and bruises.
- Lack of normal judgmental abilities.
- Change in your emotions, reactions and perceptions.
- Hangovers.

If you consume a large amount of alcohol at a single session, your heartbeat and breathing levels slow down considerably. You may vomit with a substantial amount of vomit entering your lungs causing choking.

It could lead to pneumonia, coma, and possibly a very unpleasant death.

### ***Long-term Effects***

The prolonged and frequent drinking sessions of habitual drinkers accelerate the long-term effects of alcoholism. It can cripple virtually your whole body

and cause severe disruptions in the normal functioning of vital organs and body systems.

### *Effects on Your Nervous System*

Alcohol slows down and erodes the effectiveness of your natural nerve reflexes which causes inefficient judgment because of a loss of coordination between nerves and brain.

Your central nervous system suffers a breakdown.

You lose your natural, socially approved inhibitions. You may indulge in unfair and illegal activities like thieving or risky behaviors like unprotected sex. This exposes you to major diseases like HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies or other problems such as sexually transmitted diseases.

You will probably also have distortion of vision and hearing, frequent extended blackouts with memory lapses. You lose your basic sense of existence which is equal to being insane.

You are prone to alcoholic neuropathy with brain degeneration, and suffer from depression, insomnia and can easily develop suicidal tendencies.

The numbness of nerves which is common at this stage is due to improper nutritional levels and is likely to lead to major diseases like Wernicke's and Korsakoff's syndromes.

## **Liver**

Your liver is vital for your general health. It produces digestive juice for your gastrointestinal system. The regular presence of alcohol in your liver causes many unsafe chemical reactions in your liver which enlarges and develops dangerous fatty deposits. Inflammation of your liver will often cause hepatitis.

Damage to liver cells disrupts or stops their functioning and causes liver cirrhosis which causes death.

## **Gastro-intestinal System**

The prolonged presence of excessive alcohol in your body loosens your stomach muscles, which then cannot stop the backward flow of stomach acid. This acid strongly affects the esophageal tissues causing pain, bleeding, and lack of appetite. The dilated esophageal blood vessels are likely to hemorrhage and could burst, causing death.

The alcohol in the stomach can stop absorption of important nutrients, causing malnutrition and diarrhea. Pancreatic disorder is another offshoot of alcoholism.

## **Blood**

The prolonged presence of excessive alcohol in your blood increases the size of red blood cells and seriously reduces your count of protective white blood cells. Your immune system suffers and you are at constant risk of numerous infections.

This is the reason for high incidences of cancer among alcoholics.



Also, improper blood clotting causes incessant bleeding.

## **Reproductive System**

Excessive drinking has serious impact on both male and female reproductive organs and their fertility. It reduces the size of ovaries and testicles, causing decreased production of eggs and sperm and other sexual dysfunction.

Babies of alcoholic mothers suffer fetal alcohol syndrome which causes fetal abnormalities, mental retardation and physical defects.

## **Heart and Circulatory System**

High levels of alcohol in the blood increases your blood pressure to alarming levels leading to hemorrhage. It also weakens your heart muscles, enlarges your heart and causes abnormal heartbeats.

Increased blood clotting leads to heart attacks, strokes and other coronary diseases. It cripples your circulatory system and, at that advanced stage, death is inevitable.

Alcoholism is cancerous by itself and causes cancer of various body organs.

Alcoholism could cause problems for you even if you do not drink. Alcoholic family members and friends could become violent or cause serious accidents or other dangerous episodes.

## 6. Warning Signs and Symptoms of Alcoholism

Most alcoholics hide their problem from others for fear of social alienation.

You are probably suffering some level of alcoholism if you drink twelve to fifteen drinks every week or five or more drinks at least once a week. A drink is equal to a five-ounce glass of wine, twelve-ounce bottle of beer or one and half ounce shot of alcohol.

You can best help yourself by recognizing impending stages of alcoholism. Of course, you need to be honest and your comparison should be with someone that definitely is not an alcoholic.

To check if you may be an alcoholic, answer these three questions with utmost truth about yourself;

1. Do you think about alcohol? Placing you and a non-alcoholic on the same standard, the non-alcoholic will not think about alcohol.
2. Do you plan when to drink? Planning and scheduling your drinking indicates that alcohol is more important in your life than the lives of regular, healthy people.
3. Do you drink on the sly? Drinking without other's knowledge and lying about your habits are sure indicators of your alcoholic ways.

The three questions are in order of severity.

If you answer, "Yes" to any of the questions, you are progressing toward alcoholism.

You must take action to retrace your steps back to normalcy immediately.

## **Signs and Symptoms of Alcoholism**

Alcoholics rarely accept their alcoholic habits and become increasingly assertive in their denials. Alcoholic symptoms and signs differ from individual to individual, although there are some which are typical with almost everyone.

Common signs are -

1. Blackouts and memory lapses.
2. Depression, irritability and anxiety.
3. Slackness and regular absence from work or classes.
4. Physical instability leading to shaky walking and frequent falling.
5. Insomnia and weight loss.
6. Loss of employment and subsequent financial problems.
7. Frequent accidents.
8. Broken relationships, divorces and separations.

Other symptoms include -

- Drinking alone.
- Drinking early in the morning.
- Unable to control your drinking or stopping but promising to do so.

- Nausea and vomiting.
- Abdominal pain and lack of interest in food.
- Numbness and jittery nerves.
- Shaking of body in mornings
- Feeling confused about everything
- Turning hostile and even violent when questioned about drinking.
- Neglecting your physical appearance.
- Giving drinking more importance than anything else, including family.
- Your vocal pitch increases with greater intake of alcohol.
- Frequent aggressiveness and other changes in personality and behavior.

Uncontrolled alcoholism could lead to severe disorders of body and brain.

These include serious medical conditions and ailments like;

neuropathy, Korsakoff's dementia, Wernicke's encephalopathy, brain degeneration, hallucinations, seizures, cirrhosis, pancreatitis, alcoholic cardiomyopathy, gastrointestinal bleeding, anemia and peptic ulcers.

Psychiatric disorders and even suicidal tendencies are common.

And this shocking list is not complete!

## 7. Common Causes of Alcoholism

Alcoholism usually starts with you drinking in small quantities but it slowly becomes a habit. Perhaps you start drinking to overcome stress or seek refuge from certain problems.

You find it difficult to quit and, eventually, this inclination becomes an addiction. You become dependent on alcohol to help you get over sorrows, miseries, disappointments, injuries, and the like. You feel that you can combat everything in this world if you have a drink.

Unfortunately, this is a total misconception. Instead, you lose your capabilities and become a slave to your drinking habit.

Alcoholics develop their dependence for a variety of reasons, no two are likely to be identical. There are no proven causes that are specific to particular age groups. Everyone is influenced to various degrees by peer pressures, disappointments, accidents and tragedies, whatever their age and social situation.

Children and grandchildren of alcoholics may be more likely to become alcoholics due to environmental influences and certain genetic or biochemical abnormalities but other children from similar backgrounds are able to make their own successful paths through life.

The offspring of alcoholic parents may possess greater capacity to consume alcohol and they try to indulge in more drinks than their mates to show off their capability. This acts as an initial boost along the path to you turning into an alcoholic.

Some people say that they are better able to relax with a drink. Some others start drinking just for the fun of it, to be a part of their peer group or to satisfy their curiosity and find what it feels like.

Some other people feel that consuming alcohol provides them with relief from their physical and psychological traumas; it acts as a de-stressor for them.

Unfortunately, this is their misconception. Drinking only temporarily numbs the nerves and brain. You become mentally incapable of discerning your problems and finding proper solutions to them.

A single drink leads to many more; you slowly develop a regular pattern (really a hard-to-break habit) and then you become an addict, unable to survive without alcohol.

It is not just a quiet drink in the evening. Instead, it develops to drinking all throughout the day or, rather, all your waking hours. With addiction, you lose count of time, day and night; you wake up or are conscious at odd hours and always drink away your time.

There are exceptions to this, some alcoholics have greater sustaining strength and they continue with their relatively normal lives until the late and most serious stages.

You might attempt to see your psychiatrist as a way to fix your problem. But your negative mental state, already induced by the alcohol, fills your mind with anxiety, tension, depression, loneliness, gloominess, and discontent. These symptoms all encourage you to just take more alcohol which worsens your state.

Initially, you drink to overcome or forget these problems. However, drinking gradually weans you away from normal life and you create your own problems like;

- x irregular attendance at place of work leading to financial problems,
- x lack of social life with family and friends leading to marital discord and distancing with peer groups,
- x indulgence in illegal and wrong activities, etc.

Although you took to alcohol to overcome problems, you accumulate more by excessive drinking and find it almost impossible to break the vicious circle.

Alcoholism is not due to any blemishes or irregular features of a person's character. Many people label alcoholics as having always been of loose, immoral, or defective character. Even some in the medical community view them in a similar way but the causes for alcoholism are varied and diverse. It can grip and destroy any type of person, whatever their abilities and accomplishments.

Only you can attribute your drinking habit to any particular cause.

## **8. Alcoholism Related to Stress**

**S**tress is a subjective feeling of tension due to such physical or mental pressures as injury, illness, fear, depression, sexual activities or extreme temperatures.

These reactions are magnified in an alcoholic and cause them to seek more alcohol for the relief they, mistakenly, think that it gives them.

### **How your body responds to stress**

Your body needs to maintain its stable state (in medical terms – homeostasis) for normal functioning of all your vital organs. Stressors in the form of contribute to disturbance of this state.

Your body triggers a set of physiological responses to combat stress and regain its internal balance. When there is continual stress, your body also changes its behavioral patterns to adapt to the stress.

Response to stress involves coordination between your body's central nervous system, cardiovascular system and adrenal system. Disturbances in your homeostasis state leads to the release of corticotrophin (CRF) in the hypothalamus gland of your brain. This CRF immediately passes into your blood and makes your pituitary gland release adrenocorticotrophin hormone (ACTH). This, in turn, causes secretion of glucocorticoid hormones from your adrenal glands.

These hormones are body steroids which responding to stress and are responsible for eradicating it.



Stress response affects functioning of all your major body organs like kidneys, gastrointestinal tract, etc. and also affects your other body functions like appetite, vigilance, arousal, body temperature, mood, etc.

Your body directs more oxygen and nutrients to the stressed parts of your body for faster recovery and return to a stable homeostasis state.

However, recognition of stress and the effectiveness of the resultant responses differ from individual to individual. This mainly depends on genetic factors and environmental influences since infancy.

### **Is Stress Harmful?**

Small amounts of stress in bursts do not bring about any large changes in your body's homeostasis state. However, prolonged stress produce harmful effects in your body's functions. The effects could include damage to cells which could lead to defective learning and memory retention, retarded growth and immune system dysfunction.

### ***Does Stress Always Lead to Drinking Problems and Alcoholism?***

Stress is a major cause of alcoholism but stress does not inevitably lead to drinking problems and alcoholism. Numerous surveys, reports and studies show that many people start drinking to excess due to stressful conditions like marital problems, economic and job problems etc.

Incidence of stress-related problems with alcohol is higher in cases where there is a lack of social and familial support. Stress and consumption of alcohol increase together; the higher the stress, the greater alcohol consumption.

But, it is not always true that you take to drinking when you experience stress. It depends on many factors, including;

- Your usual drinking habits,
- Your genetic buildup and response to stress,
- The degree of stress,
- The extent of your self-control over stress,
- The social support available to you during stress, and
- Your expectation of relief from stress through drinking alcohol.

In all, stress leading to alcoholism is an individualistic condition. If you want to avoid it, you can do so and regain homeostasis state through other means.

Scientific studies indicate greater inclinations towards consumption of alcohol due to stress prevalent in people that had prolonged stress during infancy and childhood. Such early stressful situations can cause permanent alterations in their hormonal stress response which, in due course, offers a different response than normal to alcoholic consumption. Real life examples show a marked increase in alcohol consumption during natural disasters like floods, volcanic eruptions etc in the vicinity. Drinking will occur during or in anticipation of the stress.

### ***Does Drinking Relieve or Induce Stress***

Small doses of alcohol can bring down stress levels. You drink to reduce a particular stressor and, in turn, cause stressful reactions in your body and behavior.

In other words, you do something, seeking relief, but which produces a similar effect as the stress caused. This is a challenging paradox of life where your stress response seems to prod you to drink more so that you will experience higher levels of excitement.

## 9. Is There a Cure for Alcoholism?

Alcoholism is a major public health issue and of great concern to all governments of all countries.

Despite extensive advances in medical science, there is currently no cure for alcoholism. In-depth research into genetics and effects of alcoholism on general health has widened understanding of alcoholism which increases the possibility of a cure for alcoholism some time in the future.

This does not mean alcoholics are incurable or must be left to suffer the consequences of alcoholism without any hope. Further study of the factors leading to alcoholism show some promise of providing a cure.

The human brain registers feelings of happiness and pleasure on fulfillment of basic natural instincts. Just before such pleasure sessions, your body releases certain bio-chemicals - neurotransmitters. These stimulate specific brain cells called receptors, which cause positive feelings and you feel happier.

Similar substances are present in alcohol. They contain endorphins, which create complex reactions by stimulating your body's neurotransmitters. They trigger pleasurable feelings and you forget your worries and tension.

Some feel very high with just low alcohol intake while some need larger and larger amounts of alcohol to feel that good.

This feeling does not induce everyone to abuse alcohol. Detrimental effects like headaches, nausea, and drowsiness drive away most after their first alcohol overdose.

## Why Do People Abuse Alcohol?

Some of the main causes of developing alcoholic habits include;

- Growing up in a broken home,
- Having alcoholic parents and families,
- Having a disturbed childhood;
- Mixing with wrong company.

But, it must be stressed that many children that suffer from the same sort of circumstances also develop into model citizens.

Many people start to abuse alcohol initially because it makes them feel happy, and there is not much, if any, of that in their lives at that time.

Your body neurons crave for greater pleasure sessions, which incites you to drink more alcohol. Beyond a certain limit, you no longer feel the high which you experienced previously and you keep drinking, trying to drown your grievances and disappointments.

This state of neuroadaptation makes you lose control over yourself. Further addiction leads you to develop a more intense craving for alcohol.

This quickly goes beyond all standards of body health, safety and well-being. You also face ostracism from society, which does not accept an alcoholic.

### ***Can You Bring Back an Alcoholic or Cure Their Habit?***

Although there is no medicinal cure for alcoholics, you can bring back an alcoholic through proper behavioral reforms and related treatments.

It is a Herculean task, as you need to be weaned away from the intense urge to drink alcohol. This is a very delicate situation as your urges and cravings govern your very existence. It is not possible to crush urges immediately.

Instead, behavior modification through regular counseling sessions instills self-control. Supportive family and friends can see you through your crisis.

You need to stay away from familiar alcoholic surroundings like bars, alcoholic smells, sights and sounds as these re-awaken the strong cravings and you would probably relapse.

## 10. Myths and Misconceptions About Alcoholism

Myths and misconceptions about alcoholism abound and addicts need to know all the facts, as presently known, to help them adopt a constructive approach towards rebuilding their lives.

Some of the most common myths (with the **facts**) are-

**MYTH: Everyone can consume the same amount of alcohol.**

**FACT:** Individual physiological factors like body weight, gender, and metabolism govern alcoholism and differ from person to person.

**MYTH: Having a drink on full stomach minimizes the alcohol's effects.**

**FACT:** A full stomach only delays absorption of the alcohol but does not prevent you from getting drunk.

**MYTH: Combinations of beer, liquor, and wine provide more intoxication.**

**FACT:** Combinations can give you a stomach upset as well but not higher intoxication levels.

**MYTH: Hot Coffee, cold showers or fresh air can get you out of your intoxication.**

**FACT:** These stimulants wake you up but cannot remove alcohol from your system. It takes about an hour for your body to get rid of the alcohol of one drink.

**MYTH: Alcohol addiction is a pleasure.**

**FACT:** Alcohol addiction can never be a pleasure as it breaks the links you have with your family, friends and society, as well as being a factor in the break-down of your health.

**MYTH: Alcohol helps solve many problems of loneliness, despair, and unhappiness.**

**FACT:** Alcohol only offers you respite from problems while your mind is blurred by recent intake of alcohol.

Problems never just go away. You need to deal with them properly and take necessary steps to solve them.

**MYTH: Youngsters are prone to alcoholism.**

**FACT:** Alcoholism has no greater attraction for any particular age group or social strata.

**MYTH: It is difficult for elderly person to change their alcoholic habits.**

**FACT:** Anybody can adopt corrective treatment to let go of his or her alcoholic habits. The elderly, as a group, have the highest success rate in alcoholic treatments.

**MYTH: Beer has lower intoxication effect.**

**FACT:** Beer, wine and spirits are all intoxicating drinks. The quantity of intake decides intoxication levels and not the type of drink by itself.



**MYTH: Rehabilitation treatments are only for unemployed and poor.**

**FACT:** People from all sections of society are helped by rehabilitation programs. All kinds of people are subject to the effects of alcohol – people with more resources simply have more to lose.

**MYTH: People on Rehab treatments lose their jobs.**

**FACT:** Employers encourage alcoholics to rehabilitate and support them during their rehabilitation period.

**MYTH: Rehabilitation sessions are stressful and difficult.**

**FACT:** Rehab sessions are an appropriate combination of compassion and facts. You need to;

- accept that alcohol addiction is fatal and destroys all relationships.
- accept your shortcomings, and
- abandon your immaturity, anti-social behavior and negative thinking.

Trained counselors help you with all this through directness and compassion.

**MYTH: Treatment ends alcohol addiction.**

**FACT:** Treatment is just the start in the quest to rebuild your health and your life. You need to stay committed to recovery from your alcohol addiction.

## **Part-III: Effects of Alcohol Abuse**

### **11. Alcoholism and Your Brain**

Researchers used Electrophysiology, the study of electrical signals in the human brain, to understand the effects of certain substances on brain function. They saw characteristic differences in the brain activities of alcoholics and non-alcoholics.

Alcohol causes specific effects on brain cells. Small doses of alcohol lead to blurring of vision, unstable walking and difficulty in maintaining body balance, incoherent talking and inability to think clearly and behave normally.

These effects wear off after your body gets rid of the alcohol. If you take to chronic drinking, your body is constantly affected by alcohol and it is never cleared from your body.

Slowly, residual alcohol takes an increasing toll on your body cells, especially your brain cells. It eats them away, causing irreparable and permanent damage to your brain and, consequently, all body functions.

Chronic alcoholics suffer from extensive and, usually, irreparable damage to their brain, specifically the front cortex of the brain which plays a major role in decision-making and judgment. Alcohol addiction causes the destruction of these cells, resulting in lack of proper judgment capabilities.

The normal coordinated and well-controlled actions face total disruption due to alcohol intake and you display distressing and destructive emotions and actions.

## **How does Alcohol cause Intoxication?**

Alcohol disrupts the normal functioning of different receptors and neurotransmitters like glutamate, GABA, and serotonin. This damages the interconnecting nerve fibers of your brain cells which leads to memory lapses, motor disturbances, impaired ability to learn or understand anything and impaired walking, standing and talking, etc. Then, slowly, you can lose consciousness.

### ***How the brain is affected***

Chronic alcoholism damages and disrupts myelin production. Myelin insulates the information carrying cells. Damage to myelin results in serious thinking deficiencies.

Common, major brain disorders due to alcoholism are Alcoholic Dementia and - a total loss of intellectual abilities leading to distinct changes in personality and Wernicke-Korsakoff's syndrome which causes incoherence, lack of physical coordination, and mental confusion. These cause difficulties in physical movements, vision, speech, memory, hearing and nutritional problems due to vitamin deficiencies from improper food intake.

The extent of the damage you suffer depends on some factors including;

- Your age and when you started drinking
- Your level of education
- How often and how much you drink
- Your gender and general health condition

- Your genetic make up
- Alcoholism traits in your family history

Scientists are developing various effective techniques and therapies for treatment and prevention of alcohol-related disorders. Besides, their research provides high-tech tools that help them to better understand the effects of alcoholism on humans so that they can develop new and better methods of treatment.

## **12. Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome**

### **What is Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome?**

Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome refers to the symptoms experienced by people who suddenly stop their drinking after being a seasoned drinker. Such symptoms could include;

- sweating,
- shaking of your body,
- hallucinations and, in extreme cases,
- D.T.'s (delirium tremens – hallucinations).

These symptoms are stronger in those who have previously quit drinking, then started again, and then quit their serious drinking habit.

### ***Your Doctor can Help You***

You need to discuss all aspects of your alcoholic habit with your doctor to ensure that your Doctor understand your withdrawal symptoms and can provide the best medical treatment for you.

Lack of adequate medical attention during this period could have serious consequences, especially if you have heart, lung or other ailments.

Such withdrawal symptoms could be even more severe if you quit drinking as well as drugs like cocaine at same time.

You must visit a doctor and discuss all aspects before quitting.

### ***How Your Doctor can Help Your Withdrawal***

Your doctor's help will keep problems to a minimum during your withdrawal. He may prescribe medicines to control your problems such as shakiness, confusion and anxieties during the withdrawal period. Using these medicines from the start of the process can strongly reduce withdrawal symptoms.

### ***How can my family and friends contribute to withdrawal process?***

The support of close friends and, especially, your family is tremendously important as you resist the craving to drink during withdrawal. Your family and friends can help you overcome this urge and you can also find support in the withdrawal programs of Alcoholics Anonymous.

### **13. Alcoholism is a Family Crisis**

Alcoholism affects individuals with no respect for age, sex, creed, caste, literacy, income or social levels, etc. Alcoholics may be young men or women, teenagers, elderly people, etc. They all have their families with husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, parents, children, etc. An alcoholic will disrupt the family's harmony and each members' personal well-being, leading to lifelong problems. It is a major family.

#### **Parental Alcoholism**

Children of alcoholic parents often suffer from chronic depression, fear of abandonment, loneliness, guilt, low self-esteem and an inability to deal with traumatic situations at home.

Children can feel they cause the alcoholism in their parent and they experience high stress and tension. They are prone to bed-wetting, crying and nightmares. They have few friends and avoid going to school or meeting and mixing with other children.

Older children or teenagers who have alcoholic parents have similar symptoms. They prefer being alone and shun company. They are very self-conscious and develop a poor self-image.

They develop phobias about imaginary things. These children often dropout of school because they cannot study in the tense atmosphere at their homes. Their inability to express themselves freely with teachers and their peer group is another reason for their poor school performance. They easily fall into bad company and indulge in petty crimes, thieving, fighting, and lying. Their

erratic behavior is re-enforced by the unpredictable behavior of their parents and the unstable home environment.

Some children behave differently. They feel they can change their alcoholic parent. They aim for high grades at school, hide liquor from their parent and are normally very meek in nature. They feel very guilty if they cannot make any change in their parent's behavior.

Assault and domestic violence is common in alcoholic households. Children often are the most common target and yet feel guilty and ashamed about each episode. These children often take to drinking when young.

These children continue their impulsive and depressed behavior patterns after they grow into adults. They normally do not reveal that they have alcoholic parents.

They carry their negative image with them and make bad career choices. They find it difficult to maintain relationships and feel that they are failures. They are unable to handle family responsibilities because they missed their childhood.

They are frightened to express their affection to others for fear of losing them just as they lost their alcoholic parents. They seem to get along better with alcoholics than with non-alcoholics.

### **The Spouse of an Alcoholic**

The alcoholic's partner needs to take total responsibility for the family's welfare. This causes them to develop self-pity, hatred and complete physical and mental exhaustion.



The spouse needs to be both parents, which leads to inconsistency of treatment and neglect of their children. Financial and marital problems increase. Some spouses encourage more alcoholism by denying the problem to others, which they believe will help to keep the family together. They try to ignore the problems for fear of social ostracism.

### **Alcoholism in Pregnant Women**

Pregnant alcoholics cause the same levels of alcohol in their fetus as in their bodies. This is very harmful to the unborn baby and leads to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, which is one of the top causes for birth defects.

Such babies are born shorter, have lower body weight and can suffer brain and skull deformities. Characteristic facial features are small eyes, flat faces with thin upper lips and a damaged nervous system.

They face problems with speaking, learning, memory, judgment, their behavior and even lifelong mental retardation. Most of these are permanent effects.

## **14. Women Alcoholics Face Greater Health Risks Than Men**

Women encounter higher health risks due to alcoholism than men. The difference is due to physiological differences between men and women. Women are physically weaker and smaller than men. They also have a higher percentage of fat in their bodies, which means their metabolism (processing) of the alcohol they drink is less efficient.

Women develop the same alcohol-related diseases as men. They encounter higher intoxication levels than men for about the same intake of alcohol because there are higher water levels in men than in women. When alcohol mixes with water in the body, it is diluted and processed at a slower rate than in males due to the lower water content in the bodies of females. So, it is recommended that women drink less and at a slower rate than men. For those same reasons, women's hangovers are longer and they take longer to recover from intoxication.

Women get sick more quickly than men. Recovery programs results are slower to develop for alcoholic females than for alcoholic males but they are still an essential step for women. Recovery treatments follow a rule of '5 to 15'. Women take only five years to reach a particular stage of alcohol-induced disease while men take fifteen years to reach a similar level, although their intake of alcohol is the same.

Different vital organs and body parts suffer due to alcoholism. These serious effects are more common in females and pose major health risks. Major

alcohol-related diseases progress rapidly in women. The effects of alcoholism on different body organs of females are -

- **Nervous system:** Your nerves and brain are highly sensitive to alcohol. Women suffer more nerve damage such as peripheral neuropathy with fewer years of regular and heavy drinking in comparison to men. A particular part of brain coordinates the overall functioning of brain and associated nerves. This region is comparatively smaller for women and the effects more pronounced and faster than in males. Brain shrinkage, learning problems and memory problems are more marked in females, highlighting their extra vulnerability.
- **Liver:** Incidences of alcoholic hepatitis and cirrhosis are higher in women. They may even develop these diseases after consuming less alcohol and within a shorter time than is common with male alcoholics.
- **Heart ailments:** Larger dosages of alcoholic drinks are, potentially, very harmful for women but a single drink is believed to help protect them from heart attacks, alcoholic cardiomyopathy, and other heart ailments. This is not certain – research continues.
- **Cancer:** Excessive drinking can be a factor in the development of breast cancer by, for instance, lowering the effectiveness of your body's immune system.

Alcoholism can end in your death, insanity or other permanent impairment if not properly treated. It is significant factor in the development and impact of innumerable diseases, many of which are also fatal.

Around forty percent of alcoholics in United State are women. Society shuns alcoholics and even more so if it is a woman alcoholic. There is a particular stigma attached to women alcoholics. So, denials are even higher amongst women than men. This is a major factor hindering women from seeking proper medical treatment for their alcoholism. They try to keep it within their homes rather than go out into the open world to seek treatment and recovery. Women also have a higher percentage of dropouts from alcoholism treatment programs.

Seeking treatment and sticking it is probably a harder task for many women than that of many male alcoholics but it is essential that they find their courage because the future health and well-being of their family, as well as themselves, depends on them doing it.

## **15. Alcoholism in the Elderly**

Alcoholism is a significant problem afflicting many of our elderly but does not often come to the public's notice. Normally, only one third of elderly alcoholics develop alcoholism later in life while the rest age with the alcoholic problems of their youth. Effects of alcoholism remain the same but have greater intensity in the elderly as body functions naturally weaken with age and become even more vulnerable with alcoholism.

### **Effects of Alcoholism**

Age brings some limitations in physical movement and body functions. Physiological weakness is common and more pronounced in the presence of excessive alcohol intake. Many elderly people are normally susceptible to falls and alcoholism increases the risks and effects.

Some diseases and conditions which can affect any alcoholic are more prevalent and damaging with the elderly alcoholic. Elderly people's nervous systems are susceptible to damage which can lead to neuropathy and myopathy. Different nerve syndromes like Delirium, a state of confusion; Korsakoff's syndrome leading to memory lapses, Wernicke's encephalopathy leading to abnormal eye movements due to thiamine deficiency, cerebral atrophy with dementia leading to deficient mental judgmental capacities are common among elderly alcoholics.

Osteoporosis, a common ailment in elderly people is aggravated by alcoholism and hip fractures are harder to recover from because of the dis-orientation they suffer as their alcoholism progresses.. Alcoholism further increases the

occurrence of and damage by gastrointestinal diseases and bleeding. Liver inflammations cause cirrhosis or alcoholic hepatitis, which are fatal.

Moderate drinking habits in elderly people tend to increase hypertension which becomes dangerous and leads to strokes and nervous breakdowns. Alcoholic cardiomyopathy, a serious heart condition, can also result from excessive intake of alcohol.

A high alcohol content reduces the body's immune capacity and makes you more prone to infections and less able to fight them off. Pneumonia attacks are common with increased vomiting tendencies and possible bouts of unconsciousness. If you had Tuberculosis in your younger days; chances of a relapse are higher when alcoholism reduces your immune capacity. Similarly, human immunodeficiency virus infection or HIV can also occur partly as a consequence of alcoholism.

Alcoholics reduce their food intake and so your body suffers from nutritional deficiencies like Folate and Macrocytosis due to lack of vitamin B12.

Alcoholism in elderly people often leads to cancers of neck, esophagus, liver, and head.

Many psychiatric ailments like depression, insomnia, restlessness are common among elderly alcoholics too.

### **Signs of Alcoholism in Elderly People**

It is more difficult to identify alcoholism in elderly people as they do not suffer problems which are uniquely identifiable as being caused by heavy drinking. Physicians analyze and locate alcoholism through the increased lack of self-care tendencies and severe decline in their thinking capability. They use

different tools to identify the problem. However, most tools do not differentiate between recent and past bouts of alcoholism.

### **How to Support Elderly Alcoholics to Recovery**

After identification of their alcoholism, we must detoxify their body. The withdrawal period can involve nausea, insomnia, increased and intensified occurrences of tremors, auditory or tactile hallucinations, or illusions, anxieties, agitated feelings and hyperactivity.

A few patients also develop delirium, falls and become incapable of carrying on with daily activities. Hence, outpatient detoxification is good for medically stable persons whereas in-patient treatment have to be done for others.

Regular doses of Benzodiazepines can be effective but they need to be low dosages or they might lead to prolonged sedation in patients. Other therapies include thiamine and other vitamin supplementation, checking electrolyte disturbances and normal supportive care.

After detoxification, elderly alcoholics need outpatient therapy and community rehabilitation programs. Adequate family support, with sufficient knowledge of alcoholism goes a long way in curing alcoholism in elderly and brings them back into your family.

## **16. Effects of Alcoholism in Teens**

Our teenage years are very vulnerable and exuberant. Teenagers often conduct themselves in ways which are not very ideal for their health and safety. They drink alcohol without being aware or concerned of its inherent dangers or intoxicating effects.

They drink because it is the 'in' thing and most of their peer group drinks.

Estimates about the drinking habits of American teenagers reveal that around half a million go on weekly binges with the sole aim of getting drunk while at least eight million consume alcohol every week. The habit starts as early as the eighth grade.

Research indicates that the average age for first-time alcohol users is eleven for boys and thirteen for girls and regular drinking starts at an average age of around sixteen years.

They are oblivious to the ill effects of alcohol; do not have any idea of alcohol contents or the effects and relative strengths of different alcoholic beverages.

### **Signs of Alcoholism in Teenagers**

Teenagers are not always forthcoming in disclosing their drinking habits.

However, it is possible to identify addiction through simple measures such as:

- Unexplained and repeated physical injuries
- Tremors, dilated pupils, blurred or rapid speech, excessive perspiration whatever the weather conditions, incessant coughs



- Sudden loss of body weight
- Incidence of Hepatitis A or B or C and high bilirubin levels
- Falling academic grades for no apparent cause
- Inflamed or eroded septum
- Depression and suicide attempts
- Indulgence in risky behavior patterns like unprotected sex leading to Sexually Transmitted Diseases and pregnancy
- Behavioral changes like quickly becoming hostile, isolated, secretive or aggressive
- Petty crime and getting into frequent brawls with police

### **Causes of Alcoholism in Teenagers**

Teenagers take to drinking due to various factors like -

1. Peer drinking and their desire for acceptance
2. Excessive drinking of parents
3. Lack of proper grooming
4. Lack of parental support or communication at home
5. Harsh attitude of parents and guardians with strict discipline at home

6. Broken homes or a strained relationship between parents

Consequently, teenagers who live with a congenial home atmosphere and are aware of alcohol's dangers rarely take to excessive drinking.

### **Effects of Alcoholism on Teenagers**

Alcoholism in teenagers leads to extensive alcoholic dependence by their early twenties. Such dependence frequently contributes to alcohol-related incidents of violence, homicides, automobile crashes and suicides.

The teenagers also suffer from their incapacity to handle the normal developmental processes of their bodies and may become emotional wrecks. Some are equally unable to work through their period of adolescence and then adulthood with additional responsibilities of education, employment, marriage, family and so on.

Excessive intake of alcohol early in life can be very harmful as your body is still growing. Your body organs have their maximum growth period in adolescence. Alcohol hampers such growth and it can have serious negative effects on your body.

This encourages irregular metabolism, insufficient absorption of nutrients and vitamins (due to lack of sufficient intake of good food) and several psychological disorders.

You can experience high anxiety levels, depression, defiance, and personality disorders which affect your health in the long-term and also lead to antisocial activities.

## **Treating or Combating Alcoholism in Teenagers**

Many teenagers start on the alcoholic treadmill. This probably would not happen if they were fully aware of all the facts about alcoholism. Teens and pre-teens need to understand the effects of drinking, their potential dangers, possible involvement in crimes and violent encounters and suicides.

Their uninformed actions become a major part of the cause of their own death. They need good life skills to skillfully cope with many emotional problems. This is possible through proper and adequate education.

Now, there are many treatment and rehabilitation programs for alcoholic teenagers to help to bring them back to leading normal lives as self-confident individuals.

Best results are obtained through self-help groups involving advice from health professionals and active support, guidance and acceptance from family members.

Alcoholic treatment programs cannot function in isolation.

## **Part-IV: Prevent or Coping with Alcoholism**

### **17. Preventing Alcoholism Through Education**

If alcoholic tendencies are to be curbed in people's formative years, it is vital to educate parents and children about the dangers and ongoing ill effects of alcoholism through the community and in schools.

Promotion of strategies to cope with alcohol is through talks, lectures, question-answer sessions, distribution of pamphlets, seminars and coordinated treatment programs through social organizations. There are many support organizations like Marlborough, Massachusetts-based SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving), Al-Anon and Al-A-Teen.

#### **Where to Start**

Treatment programs include educating alcoholics about the ill-effects and harmful consequences of alcoholism. The treatment starts with the alcoholics themselves, as they need to understand and accept consequences of their drinking on the families such as depression, broken relationships, alcoholism of their children and family, unemployment etc.

Then we must develop self-care instructions. Your drinking is responsible for all your woes and you have to decide to put a stop to it.

You can analyze situations, causes and factors which encourage your drinking and avoid them. It is easier said than done, so do not push yourself too hard too soon or you could relapse into your drinking habit.

Instead, set realistic goals and focus your mind with activities like meditation, exercises, and hobbies.

Avoid caffeine and have a set pattern of going to bed and getting up in the morning. Insomnia is a predominant feature in the first weeks of your road back, but it becomes better in later weeks.

Your family has an important part in the preventive techniques. All your family members need to take part in talks and counseling sessions. Self-help groups continue their treatment for around a year as you slowly learn to adjust to a life without alcohol. Aftercare programs continue for another year with similar activities, but on a smaller scale.

Religious institutions like churches also play a very important role in educating people about alcoholism. Churches normally have a wide range of individuals of all age groups. This helps to get the message deep in to the hearts of more people.

## 18. Alcoholism Diet Plan

Treatment programs, by themselves, cannot wean you off alcoholism. You need to follow and stick with specific diet plans to reduce your cravings for alcohol and prevent any relapse.

Alcoholics often suffer from hypoglycemia, a condition of low blood sugar. Alcohol is rich in calories but poor in nutrients. Alcoholics normally substitute it for food and so they suffer from nutritional deficiencies.

Alcoholism affects two main body organs extensively Liver and Pancreas. Your liver takes toxic substances from your food and regulates the consistency of your blood.

Your pancreas maintains blood sugar levels and absorbs the fat into your body. Alcohol disables both these organs and their functioning. This leads to imbalances in the fluids, electrolytes and calorie content in your body. Possible results include liver cirrhosis, malnutrition, diabetes, and seizures because your nutritional levels are low and you suffer numerous vitamin deficiencies.

Recovering alcoholics need to follow some basic diet patterns:

- Eat three healthy meals each day with up to two sugar free snacks between the meals. This meal pattern maintains your normal blood sugar levels and reduces your craving which lead to the abuse of alcohol.
- Avoid foods like pastries, white bread, fruit juices, grapes, dried fruits, mashed potatoes and white rice. Instead, eat fiber-rich foods like

vegetables, brown rice, lentils, beans, organic meat, fish, tofu and nuts.

Fiber-rich foods contain more nutrients than refined foods.

- Snacks could include nuts or a handful of seeds with a piece of fruit.
- Analyze your food allergies like barley, yeast, malt or wheat which are commonly found in alcohol. Stay away from those foods in case it rekindles your desire to drink alcohol.
- Reduce your consumption of saturated fats and fried foods.
- Women alcoholics who are past their menopause need sufficient calcium supplements to counter the possibility of osteoporosis.

You also need to supplement your food with nutritional and health supplements which may include single dosages of Advanced Antioxidant, Multivitamin, and mineral, Magnesium Pantothenate, and Digestive enzyme with main meals. These build up your health, repair your damaged cells and tissues and reduce your cravings for alcohol.

You may need to take doses of Vitamin B Complex, Vitamin C, Calcium and Magnesium, Chromium Picolinate and Lipoic Acid or doses of Blue-Green Algae capsules and Granules containing phosphatidyl choline.

These sort of nutrients supply essential energy and substances to get on with bodybuilding and tissue maintenance. While recovering from alcoholic excess, you go through a lot of changes in your body physiology and lifestyle.

You will go through stress conditions because of withdrawal of your previous alcohol intake. Your nutritional intake is of prime importance during your recovery period to help to prevent a relapse.

A low-sodium diet with many leafy green vegetables, which are rich in vitamin K, helps to combat withdrawal symptoms such as hypertension which is a common symptom during alcohol withdrawal.

The normal nutritional pattern is the same for all individuals during their recovery period but diet plans are adapted according to every individual because of differences in age and the extent of their individual alcoholism.

Your meals need to be regular and low in fat, but rich in protein content, fiber, and complex carbohydrates. The meals should be at set times because any irregularity in your eating habits hampers your recovery process.

Dehydration is also likely during your recovery period. So, adequate fluid intake is essential during, before and after meals. High calorie foods are bad for you as they offer poor nutrition. You can watch your recovery levels through regular check-ups of body weight, anemic or vitamin deficiencies.

### ***Educational Support***

Emotional counseling supplements your nutritional diet plans. Counseling on how to change your eating habits, maintain regular meal times. Involvement of your family in meal preparation adds to developing better self-esteem as you recover from alcoholism.

Strong psychosocial support is essential for recovery along with sensible nutritional intake are fundamental components. You can consult a professional dietician to draft out your individual meal patterns. Registered dieticians work in coordination with your physician to ensure a smooth, complete and successful rehabilitation process.



## **19. Motivation as Part of Successful Treatment**

Motivation is an important contributor to the best outcome of your alcoholic treatment program. The motivation has to come from within you to push you through the difficult times during your treatment and rehabilitation programs. This motivation can prove to be more effective than normal detoxification programs. So, researchers consider the motivational techniques play a significant role in your alcoholism treatment program.

These treatments offer better and faster results if you are focused on going ahead. If you are reluctant or not interested in making constructive changes in your behavior, that makes it a more difficult process to implement and gain through any alcoholic rehabilitation or treatment program.

### **Your Stages of Motivation**

There are five different stages of motivational techniques -

1. Pre-contemplation, where you consider changing in your alcoholic tendencies
2. Contemplation; considering a change but not taking the necessary action
3. Preparation; planning firm steps for changing your alcoholic behavior
4. Action: actual implementation of de-addiction techniques or steps on your recovery path.

5. Maintenance; continuing with your new ways; changes to your lifestyle and behavior so you can permanently let go of your alcoholic habits.

### *Motivational Sources*

Motivational sources either come from within you or from outside sources. Internal sources feed your desire for change in your habits which leads to maintaining a better lifestyle for you while external sources are different incentives and offers from others which encourage you to change your alcoholic habits.

Internal sources of motivation have far-reaching consequences and effects. They are normally permanent in nature, as you acknowledge your own responsibility to see through and affect results of this motivation in changing your alcoholic behavior.

External motivational sources sometimes work but can include more chances of relapse into your previous alcoholic behavior.

Sometimes, external motivational sources do not play any role in treatment programs. You find excellent guidance and results through using your internal motivation.

Another important guiding factor on the effectiveness of internal motivation is your degree of alcoholism. If you are a severe alcoholic undergoing reformation and treatment, your internal motivation is high because you desperately want to get out of the clutches of alcohol addiction and willing to go to any lengths to get rid of the problem. This is the reason for the long-term success rate of internal motivation.

However, the short-term success rate is higher with external motivation techniques like financial incentives to overcome your addiction to alcohol.

### ***How to Apply Your Motivational Treatment Programs***

Motivational treatment techniques and programs need careful implementation for best results. Aim at increasing your internal motivation to get the best outcomes. Use intervention, interviewing and enhancement techniques.

**Intervention** is straight-forward advice and relevant information about the ill effects of alcohol to encourage you to stop your alcoholic habits and inclinations. These sessions help to reduce your alcoholic habits as you realize the harmful and irreversible effects on your liver and other body organs.

**Interviewing** aims at starting or increasing your positive motivational attitude through self-help books and psychological motivational methods. This includes extensive sessions to listen to your addiction story, evaluate your current behavior and consequently induce the self-confidence to help you adopt corrective behavior.

**Therapy** is the actual process through treatment techniques and regular check-ups of their effectiveness to cure you of your alcoholic habits.

## **20. Alcohol and Controlling Your Weight**

Weight control is of prime importance for millions of Americans now. Most are trying to do away with the fattening components in their diets. Almost everyone is very diet and calorie conscious, because they want to evade the problems of obesity.

Heavy drinking leads to excessive weight gain by increasing your appetite, lowering the rate of burning of fatty substances and increasing hormonal levels which causes muscular wastage.

Most moderate drinkers do not suffer from such consequences to anything like the same degree.

Obesity is a serious health risk, often leading to increased incidence of diabetes and various heart ailments. So, people try to keep away from anything that could make them obese.

### **Effects of Alcohol on Body Weight**

Some scientific research indicates that including two glasses of wine with your supper does not affect body weight or your metabolic activities. Therefore, inclusion of wine in limited quantity may not lead to obesity. But research on chronic alcoholics indicates extensive accumulation of body mass leading to obesity due to reduced levels of metabolism.

Different alcoholic beverages have different calorific contents. Wine constitutes highest calorific value with comparatively reduced calorie contents in beer.

## 21. Twenty-one Tips for Coping with Alcoholism

Alcoholism is a condition which you can combat by following certain simple techniques which help you to overcome your alcoholic cravings:

1. Evaluate the reasons for your drinking and analyze what you really get from drinking.
2. Look into why you want to stop your drinking, such as to spend quality time with your family, improve your health, sleep better, etc.
3. It is difficult to quit drinking suddenly, so you must set realistic goals of reducing and removing drinking from your life.
4. Keep track of your drinking for a period to help analyze your progress.
5. Avoid keeping any alcohol at home as it is a constant temptation.
6. Always, sip your drink slowly and keep a gap of an hour between drinks.
7. Follow your drink with a soda, juice or, preferably, water.
8. Eat food while drinking.
9. It is not always necessary to accompany other people's drinking. Start politely, but firmly, refusing drinks.
10. Schedule one day of the week when you simply don't drink. Try to increase this one day at a time, then stop drinking for a week and, eventually, just stop altogether.

11. Keep yourself busy; work, or go outside for a walk or a movie. This reduces your focus on drinking.
12. Develop new interests or pursue old hobbies and fill your idle time with activities.
13. Keep away from places where there is heavy drinking, like bars and parties.
14. Do not drink when you are angry or upset.
15. Count on your family and well-wishers for support to help remove your alcoholic tendencies.
16. Consult your physician for the current best therapies to beat your alcoholism.

Their family members need to provide support to alcoholics during the convalescence period. Such support could be in following ways -

17. Maintain a healthy, supportive atmosphere at home and discuss alcoholic problems with counselors, clergymen, and friends.
18. Attend sessions of support groups like Al-Anon, Nar-Anon and Alateen and discuss it at home with your family member who is alcoholic.
19. Avoid discussions or arguments at home when that person is affected by alcohol.
20. Avoid preaching or punishing them for their alcoholic cravings and behavior.

21. Educate children and others in your family about the ill-effects of alcoholism.

## **22. How Do I Help My Alcoholic Husband?**

Alcoholic addiction in men is the cause of many broken marriages and homes, alcoholic children, domestic violence, infidelity and sexual dysfunction.

Sometimes, daughters of alcoholics suffer sexual assaults from their fathers in their drunken condition. This causes excessive emotional turmoil to both mothers and daughters. It can make the daughter develop an aversion towards men as a whole, which affects their personal lives from then on.

Wives desperately want to get back the man they married instead of continuing to live with a drunkard.

To accomplish your motive, consider these suggestions.

If it is becoming very difficult to live with your alcoholic husband, move away from him temporarily, but without any feelings of resentment. He will come back to you once he sobers down. Never load him with feelings of remorse, hatred, or anger. Instead, be firm but patient and maintain your temper to get back your man.

Try not to pester him with your aim of turning him into a non-alcoholic. Instead, spend sober evenings together without any nagging and postmortem of drunken brawls.

He should slowly recognize his actions were improper and feel bad about those episodes.



Never try to discuss your feelings or your husband's behavior in front of other family members, children or friends. Do not deprive others of your pleasant company.

However, you can open and pour out your woes to close friends, or your sisters and brothers. This will help you feel better and gain you fruitful advice and help from the. Do not let your husband know of your discussions with others. This lowers his esteem and he drinks more alcohol to overcome his knowledge of his shortcomings.

Your husband should start to realize your patience and suffering, which is due to his drinking habits, during sober periods. While discussing the situation privately with him, do not be entirely critical, but put your worries in front of him. Do not pester, nag or keep preaching about ill effects of drinking. Lay bare the risks to his health due to his excessive drinking and instill confidence in him to reduce his drinking to moderate levels.

That is the best way you will be able to help to bring him out of his alcoholism.

You could suggest that he go in for treatment programs with his other drinking friends. This could act as a booster for all of them together.

If he does not agree during your discussions, change the topic and you will find him coming back to the topic later in a more positive tone. After some time, he should be ready to accompany you to alcoholic rehabilitation programs or counseling sessions.

Patience is the key to changing the drinking of your husband. Handle him carefully. Any provocation could undo all your careful groundwork and you might be back to square one with your husband drinking more.

You might face disappointments many times during your attempts at reviving your husband out of his alcoholism.

Take as much as you can in your stride, as your main aim is to get back your husband from under the cloud of drunkenness. The real person is still deep under and you need to win him back through the strength of your love and persistence.

## **Part-IV: Treatment Options**

### **23. Diagnosing Problem Drinking and Alcoholism**

**P**roblem drinking and Alcoholism are a chain with one link leading to the next.

It starts with dependence on alcohol as a crutch for handling emotional and physical problems, which leads to problem drinking that leads to severe alcoholism.

You can detect such high dependence on alcohol by identifying the common traits of alcoholics:

- It is very difficult for an alcoholic to stop drinking
- He has unbearable physical and psychological symptoms if he stops drinking.
- He continuously increases his intake of alcohol, which causes a regular increase in his tolerance levels until the later, most serious stages.
- He drinks even when he has to attend to more important matters.
- He drinks through most of his waking hours.
- He does not stop drinking even when he loses his job or income and despite its detrimental effects on his health and family.
- He has more trouble with law officers.

- He is careless of his safety and drinks when driving.

Physicians can easily detect alcoholism in patients by such indicators as when you suffer from repeated injuries and other medical problems due to excessive alcohol content in body. Alcoholics are more often liars and do not spell out their habits openly. They deny their alcoholic tendencies and inclinations and try to hide their tendencies and habits for fear of social ostracism.

It is not that important to analyze how much a person drinks. The main thing is how much his drinking habits affect his relationships, family, and employment. The quantity of alcohol consumed is not the correct yardstick as different individuals have their individual metabolic rates.

The most common, preferred tool for analyzing alcoholism in individuals is the CAGE questionnaire. It consists of four questions and the first letter of each main word in the question spells out C.A.G.E.

1. Has there been any attempt by you to *cut* down on your drinking?
2. Do others' comments on your drinking habits ever *annoy* you?
3. Do you feel *guilty* about your drinking?
4. Do you need an *Eye-opener*, a morning drink to begin your day?

Genetic factors also contribute to alcoholic tendencies. Although the CAGE questionnaire presents a guaranteed accurate result of over seventy-five percent, it has certain limitations as it cannot detect binge drinking or point out those who have not yet experienced any alcoholic consequences.

AUDIT is an alcohol use disorders identification test which currently provides the best results in alcoholism diagnosis. It can detect dangerous drinking and abuse due to alcoholism and can even identify alcoholics if they are occasional drinkers. This is a paper and pencil test.

Other medical tests-mean corpuscular volume, liver function tests, and gamma glutamyl transferase tests offer only fifty percent successes. They cannot accurately detect alcoholic tendencies.

After having an alcoholic problem identified, your physician can put in more questions to arrive at the extent of alcoholism in the patient. The questions could focus on;

- frequency of drinking,
- drunken driving,
- drinking to overcome anxiety or insomnia and
- counseling sessions of Alcoholic Anonymous, etc.

These questions help in further understanding of the alcoholic's individual condition and help to suggest the most suitable remedy to overcome it.

## 24. Understanding Lab Tests for Alcoholism

There is no single, fully accurate test to determine alcoholism in an individual. Symptoms discovered by physical examination such as;

collection of enlarged veins near navel,

evidence of injuries,

yellowish skin,

abdominal fluid,

malnutrition and

decrease in size of testis in men

... could point towards alcoholism.

But, laboratory tests, while applicable mainly to chronic alcoholics, are more conclusive as they show the extent of damage to different body organs.

Laboratory tests could be radiologic, invasive, or pathological. These determine deficiencies and damage to vital organs.

Radiologic tests are only for extreme cases with a history of trauma and hypertension.

Alcoholics are deficient in various vitamins and minerals, which are significant in the development of other associated diseases. Vitamins absorbed through intestine like thiamine and folate become deficient due to the presence of

alcohol in body. Such excess alcohol also causes deficiencies of magnesium, phosphorous, and potassium. It restricts gluconeogenesis and you become glucose-tolerant if you already have pancreatic or liver disease.

## **Pathological Tests**

The Gamma-glutamyl transpeptidase test is effective in determining alcoholism. You just provide a sample of your blood from a vein in your arm to detect presence of gamma-glutamyl transferase. Through this test, you can detect alcoholism in around 35% to 85% cases. This, along with related tests such as ALT, AST, ALP, liver tests and bilirubin levels indicate the current extent of damage and alcoholism. It also differentiates between liver and bone diseases due to high levels of alkaline phosphatase.

Serum transaminases and alkaline phosphatase tests which are used to detect liver functioning, can also detect the extent of liver damage due to alcoholism. It is easy to detect relapses through Carbohydrate-deficient transferring tests.

### ***Liver Biopsy***

Normally, an elevated liver indicates alcoholism although there are certain exceptions. Liver biopsy commonly reveals Hepatitis C, Wilson's disease, and Hemachromatosis in most alcoholics.

Consultations with liver specialists and different diagnostic procedures such as antibody titers, imaging and biochemical measures can reveal the extent of damage and indicate remedial measures.

Though liver biopsies are uncommon, they will be a major tool for diagnosis of alcoholism in the near future.





## 25. How to Treat Alcoholism

Treatment of alcoholism has to be tailored to each individual person.

Initially, you are reluctant to accept that you are an alcoholic until legal, domestic and health problems prompt you to look for treatment options.

Professional intervention and counseling is essential. Treatment starts by evaluating your alcoholic state. Some combination of counseling sessions, residential programs, medications, outpatient programs, self-care and other measures are then prescribed.

The first step to effective treatment must be to determine the extent of your alcoholic dependence.

If you can control your drinking, you only need to reduce it to get rid of the problem. However, sometimes even low alcoholic intake could cause severe alcoholic problems. You then need attention of specialists in the field to overcome drinking habits.

You may find help in;

- self-help manuals,
- setting personal goals to cut down drinking,
- changing your behavioral techniques,
- counseling and
- follow-up treatments.

## Residential Programs

Residential or in-patient treatment programs include individual and group therapy sessions, abstinence from alcohol, attending counseling and lecture sessions of Alcoholic Anonymous, active therapy, work assignments and the vital involvement of family and professionals.

A typical residential program proceeds as -

- **Acceptance of Your Alcoholism** - Treatment yields best results when you have accepted your uncontrolled drinking habit and have a constructive interest in eradicating this.
- **Detoxification** - This is the next step in treatment for alcoholism. You may need sedative medications for around a week to prevent withdrawal seizures and deliriums.
- **Treatment of associated diseases** - Alcoholism occurs in close proximity with high blood pressure, liver diseases, high blood sugar and heart diseases. You need to undergo medical treatments for any such diseases which you have developed.
- **Common Drugs** - Disulfiram is the most common drug used in treating alcoholism. It does not offer a cure or remove your drinking cravings, but it causes physiological reactions within your body soon after you have your drink. It causes nausea, vomiting, headaches, and flushing, which indirectly leads to abstinence from drinking.

In some extreme cases, people refuse to take this drug and continue with their drinking.

- **Naltrexone (ReVia)** is another drug, which reduces your urge to drink but does not have any physical reactions.
- **Psychological Support** - Alcoholism causes emotional disorders which can lead to serious psychiatric disorders. Counseling and psychological support therapy offer remedial measures to counteract this.
- **After-Treatment Care** - Treatment does not stop with these measures. Alcoholism needs continuous support for more than a year after the regular treatment program to overcome the total deep-seated effects of alcoholism. Numerous aftercare homes and support programs of Alcoholic Anonymous go a long way in helping you to overcome your alcoholic tendencies and cravings, manage relapses (if any) and necessary adjustments to your lifestyle back to normalcy.

### **Self-Care at Home Programs**

You can adopt these programs at your home but you still need help of trained professionals. The physicians and health care professionals help you to overcome your alcohol addiction and combat withdrawal symptoms effectively.

Withdrawal symptoms begin around six to eight hours after you stop drinking. You should not attempt these home programs without professional medical help as it could lead to dire situations, which could even be fatal.

## **Rehabilitation Programs**

Severe alcoholics need hospitalization as withdrawal could lead to many psychiatric and emotional disturbances. You enter rehabilitation programs only after successfully exiting from the withdrawal programs.

You then accept your disease and willingly undergo treatments for sobering down and then start on treatment programs according to your individual needs.

Normally, such rehabilitation programs continue for around a fortnight. Severe cases need longer treatment periods with specific therapy sessions. These sessions teach you many skills to help you stay away from alcohol. Such skills include -

- Identification of alcoholic cravings and measures to control them
- Changing your habits and lifestyle; adhering to a regular diet and sleep regimen, engaging in other pursuits like games, music, etc
- Overcoming social pressures for drinking by avoiding bars, parties, risky people and events
- Changing your thinking pattern about drinking to overcome stress or emotional disturbances
- Developing support programs to talk about your problems
- Effectively managing relapse signals.

Finally, you can undergo several outpatient programs like Motivational, Behavioral and Facilitation therapies to abstain from drinking.

## 26. Medications

Medications and treatments for Alcoholism are used in the two phases of recovery. The first phase is withdrawal and the other is treatment to cure your addiction.

### Withdrawal or Detoxification Process

This process helps to remove the toxic effects of alcohol from your body. It is normally for around a week, depending on the severity of your alcoholism - the amount of alcohol you were drinking daily and for how long you have been an alcoholic. Abstinence from alcohol causes many physical and behavioral changes. Some mild side effects are diarrhea, nausea, insomnia, body aches, excessive sweating, trembling and high anxiety levels.

With chronic alcoholics, the symptoms are more severe, such as;

- vague illusions when you hear, see, and feel absurdities,
- seizures,
- fever,
- mental confusion about everything,
- high blood pressure,
- extreme craving for alcohol and

- delirium. Deliriums begin around three to five days after the last drink and last for some days.

If you already have one or more serious ailments such as Wernicke's syndrome, malnutrition or liver disease, your withdrawal symptoms are more severe and cover a longer period.

Mild alcoholics do not need severe medications. They must take extra fluids to clear away toxins from their body. However, chronic alcoholics need sedatives to combat severe withdrawal symptoms and any severe complications of medical diseases that they have developed. Benzodiazepines is the most common drug for combating severe withdrawal symptoms. Their fluid intake with thiamin is intravenous.

### **Further Treatment for Alcoholism**

After detoxification, you need to have medical treatment of your alcoholic addiction. A common medication for alcohol addiction is Disulfiram which causes nausea and vomiting if you drink alcohol.

Common symptoms during withdrawal are chest pain, sweating, fast heartbeat, difficulty in breathing, etc. Such symptoms last from half an hour to several hours.

You should not consume alcohol for a fortnight before starting this medicine. During your use of this medication, there should not be even slightest hint of alcohol in your body, so you need to avoid foods containing any alcohol and stay away from chemicals with alcohol. The presence of alcohol with this medicine causes severe neurological conditions, visual disturbances and eye pains.

Many therefore discontinue this medicine to carry on with their alcoholism but disulfiram is now available as an implantable device to be put under the skin.

Other medications which may be used during treatment are acamprosate, Naltrexone and some antidepressants as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI). Of all, Naltrexone is regarded by many as the most effective with fewer relapses. It does have few side effects like headache, muscular pain, anxiety, nervousness, insomnia, tiredness, nausea, stomach cramps, etc.

Another medicine, Acamprosate, successfully reduces your craving for alcohol. It restrains the functioning of a chemical in your brain-gamma amino butyric acid (GABA) - to subdue your alcoholic tendencies. Minor side effects of this medicine are headaches and diarrhea.

Antidepressants or Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors control neurotransmitter serotonin, reducing your anxiety and depression levels. They cause mild side effects like Diarrhea, Insomnia, Nausea, and Sexual dysfunction. Such treatment takes effect within a month or slightly more. Sertraline, Fluvoxamine, Fluoxetine, Citalopram, Paroxetine are some common antidepressants.

Buspirone is a new anti-anxiety drug for alcoholic medication. It is not a sedative like benzodiazepines and does not cause any physical dependence. It needs around a fortnight to a month for effects to settle down. The best way to take this medication is with your food for thorough absorption. Mild side effects could be nausea, vomiting, and headaches.

All medications should be in combination with active alcoholism counseling.

While taking medications for alcoholism, follow certain basic precautions -

- Be aware of all effects and side effects of each medicine
- Understand different drug reactions and interactions if you are on multiple drugs
- Take medicines in prescribed dosages at specified times, as directed by your physician
- Immediately report any nagging side effects or if medicine does not have the proper effect
- Do not stop medication without directions from your physician
- Keep sufficient refills for continuity in medication



## 27. Recovering from Alcoholism - Alternative Treatments

There are many other ways of treating your alcoholic cravings besides medications.

After you come out of your withdrawal period, you can undergo different therapeutically corrective methods to combat your alcoholic cravings. These complement medications and produce positive results in alcoholics within a short period. Alcoholism is normally an after-effect of stress of any kind. Therefore, different de-stressors like massage, therapies, meditation, etc. bring about vast changes in your behavior and inclinations.

These alternative treatments are;

1. **Motivation Enhancement Therapy** - A professional therapist helps you realize that your problem of alcohol addiction needs immediate treatment to overcome its negative effects on you and your family. He guides you through various constructive stages and brings a positive, even life-saving, change in your behavior.
2. **Acupuncture** - Inserting hair like needles into your skin to reduce or stop your alcoholic cravings. This helps to reduce withdrawal symptoms, anxiety levels, depression, fatigue and stress. It puts you on a permanent path for recovery from alcoholism.
3. **Couples Therapy** – This therapy involving your spouse accelerates treatment and ensures permanency of your new condition.

4. **Cognitive Behavior Therapy** - Sometimes alcoholism is due to traumatic events or psychological stress. Through this treatment, your therapist analyzes the root cause of your stress and trauma as well as its impact on your behavior which led to alcoholism. The therapy aims to set right all such psychological disorders and relieve you of your trauma so you let go of your alcoholic habits and inclinations. You learn to exercise greater control over your feelings and behavior.

5. **Aversion Therapy** - This therapy aims at combating alcoholism with aversive responses brought about by medications to avert your alcoholic tendencies. Most often, such aversions are nausea and vomiting. After some time, alcohol itself ignites such aversions and you refrain from drinking totally. This therapy is most effective but does not appeal to many people.

6. **Nutritional and Herbal Therapy** - Adjusting to eating nutritious food can speed up your recovery process and herbs like lavender, chamomile, yarrow and peppermint help your vital organs to rebuild their cells and improve your health.

7. **Counseling as a Therapy** - Alcoholics need constant reassurance and gentle pressure to make them realize the magnitude of their addiction and the serious, negative consequences of the addiction. Various support groups like Alcoholic Anonymous conduct several meetings between recovering alcoholics to provide mutual support for enhanced recovery. Such therapy involves twelve step programs, which highlight the destructive power of alcoholism on your life and looking for help from a superior power to overcome this addiction. This realization helps you realize how your drinking has been the main cause for mental tension and pain in your immediate family. The program also

involves your family members as you slowly try to make maximum amends for your deplorable behavior during your intoxication.

## **28. Nutritional Treatment for Detoxification and Recovery from Alcoholism**

Proper, adequate nutrition for your body ensures faster recovery from all ailments and, specifically, alcoholic addiction. It plays an important role from detoxification to treatment to prevention of relapses.

Different molecules of cells function differently and need different treatment. It is not advisable to follow the same treatment to combat all ailments due to alcoholism. The effect of alcoholism on different body parts varies and, therefore, recouping and recovery need to follow different patterns, too. Otherwise, you might cause more harm than benefit and lead to delay or lack of recovery from alcoholism.

Nutritional therapy aims at understanding the molecular setup of cells and treating them appropriately, according to their individual cellular structure before alcoholism affected them.

This therapy does not stress what to eat or not. Instead, it addresses which food or drink is best suited for your health. Altogether, it affects genetic and metabolic functions of your body. Therefore, greater stress is put on how much and what you absorb from your food. Alcoholics often suffer from gastrointestinal irregularities. The high alcohol content of your ravaged body does not allow satisfactory absorption of nutrients into your system and your health suffers.

Your body needs carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, water and minerals in adequate quantities to maintain your physical and mental health. Treatment

needs to start after a total assessment of your nutritional status. Treatment will be ineffective if you have suffered from different nutritional deficiencies due to excessive alcoholic addiction for a long time.

If your body lacks specific nutrients or vitamins, you need a supply of those vitamins to bring a balance in your body functions. Thereafter, you need to follow the treatment for your alcoholism.

Otherwise, you do not benefit from the treatment for alcoholism nor for your nutritional deficiencies.

Another important function of nutritional treatment is to prevent relapse into alcoholism. Most nutritional deficiencies increase alcoholic cravings and further encourage many diseases of your heart, lung, etc.

Hypoglycemia is a common condition among alcoholics. This is due to irregular and insufficient blood sugar levels in your body. A drop in blood sugar levels causes alcoholic cravings and an increased desire for sugary intake. Alcoholic recovery needs to address proper control of blood sugar levels for maximum results.

Supply of adequate nutrition and water content to your body helps to reduce cravings for alcohol and lowers depression and anxiety levels.

## 29. Quotations on Alcoholism and Recovery

"I knew that if I didn't do something [about my addictions], I'd end up exactly like Elvis." - *Singer Elton John*

"It was boys who turned into men, beer that turned into tequila and pot into speed ... and then they all turned on me." - *Comedienne Brett Butler*

"A man shouldn't fool with booze until he's fifty; then he's a damn fool if he doesn't." - *Writer William Faulkner*

"You can't drown yourself in drink. I've tried: you float." - *Actor John Barrymore*

"I exercise extreme control. I never drink anything stronger than gin before breakfast." - *Actor W C. Fields*

"The idea of one drink for me is fascinating and fantastic, but it is also an impossibility because one is too many and a thousand isn't enough." - *Musician Eric Clapton*

"I've made it a rule never to drink by daylight and never to refuse a drink after dark." - *Writer H. L. Mencken*

"Nothing works if I drink...you lie and you deceive yourself and other people. ...Now I struggle to be honest." - *Actress Melanie Griffith*

"I feel like hell. My heart feels big and pounding. I can feel the blood rush through my body. I can almost see it, rushing like red water over the boulders in my pain-filled neck and shoulders, then through my ears and into my pounding head." - *Elizabeth Taylor*

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