

Alcoholism: Causes, Effects and Solutions

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ABSTRACT

Even though some people may not be aware of it, alcohol dependence is actually a disease like many other types of addiction or substance abuse. People addicted to alcohol have a compulsion to get intoxicated all the time and cannot function properly without alcohol in their body systems.

1. Introduction

Alcoholism refers to heavy and unmoderated drinking. People suffering from alcoholism drink excessively without any form of control or discipline.

Alcoholism can also be defined as an addiction to alcohol. It is a habit that is dangerous to the health of an individual and often leads to negative social impacts as well as health complications. The American Medical Association (AMA) included Alcoholism as a illness. This suggests the severity of the problem.

2. Causes

How does one become an alcoholic? Many factors may drive an individual into alcoholism. These are some of the common causes of alcoholism:

1. **Depression:** Depression is a mental illness that is caused by various factors such as the loss of a loved one, the lack of self-esteem, unhappiness, despair, and dejection. A person who is depressed finds life an unbearable burden and to overcome all the unpleasant thoughts, finds comfort in alcohol. Unfortunately, alcohol is a depressant and as much as the person taking it may achieve that temporary high, once the effect wears off, the depression sets in and this time much worse than before. It, therefore, becomes a habit as the affected person continuously drinks to stay high and keep away the bad memories and thoughts.
2. **Hopelessness:** Even when tough times set in, people look forward to a better future knowing that what is happening is only temporary. Hopelessness, on the other hand, is the inability to foresee brighter days. A person can be hopeless of ever finding love because of too many failed relationships. Job failure and career stagnation can also lead to a state of hopelessness in an individual's professional life. To numb the unpleasant feeling, such people look to alcohol as a remedy. Since drinking does not offer any solution but a temporary high, alcoholism sets in.
3. **Mental Stress:** This can be caused by anxiety, tension, worry, excessive workload, or trauma. When your desk is full of pending work, coupled with the need to balance family and work life, mental stress

may set in. Anxiety, worry, or tension caused by unsolved issues may also lead to mental stress. To cope with the pressure, one might find alcohol an attractive solution. People who find it difficult to strike a balance between their professional and personal lives may become alcoholics as the pressure becomes too much bear. The same may happen in a situation of marital strife that leads to mental stress. The affected spouse or spouses may turn to alcoholism to cope with the ensuing stress.

4. **Pleasure:** Some people start off as social drinkers then eventually become alcoholics. The habit of taking a few drinks after work or during the weekend may turn into an alcohol addiction especially for a person who does not have the ability to regulate his or her drinking. Taking alcohol for pleasure can create a social life pattern that results in alcoholism.
5. **Compulsive habit:** There are people who work as wine-tasters. They taste wine and write reviews based on texture, smell, and the actual taste of the product. It is a job that may turn into an alcohol addiction if left unchecked. Individuals in such areas of work may develop compulsive habits and end up as alcoholics.
6. **Peer effect:** Young people are the most affected with peer influence. The need to fit in can often lead to the development of bad social habits such as alcoholism. The constant parties and weekend rendezvous are basically characterized with a lot of boozing and other illicit substances. Bad peer influence is one of the leading causes of alcohol and substance abuse among young people. The group mentality is an ideal foundation for social vices and bad habits that may affect an individual for much of his or her adult life.
7. **Accepted Cultural norm:** In some cultures, taking alcohol is a habit that is not frowned upon. In fact, it is the way of life. In such cultures, it is not uncommon to find people indulging in alcohol as early as the wee hours of the morning. Alcoholism may thus set in due to such cultural norms.

3. Risk Factors / Effects

Alcoholism has many negative impacts that can affect the health of an individual, social life, professional life, and financial life. These are some of the effects of alcohol abuse:

1. **Mental disorder:** Alcoholism affects the functioning of the brain and can lead to memory loss and psychological problems. A person can become disoriented all the time and may have trouble remembering events. Since alcohol is categorized as a depressant, it may amplify mental disorders such as depression and stress. A depressed alcoholic can develop suicidal tendencies more so when the effects of alcohol wear off.
2. **Health impact:** Alcohol abuse has several negative impacts. People addicted to alcohol, especially the hard liquor, prefer drinking over food. They may become frail and of poor health as a result of poor eating habits. This opens the door for diseases and a host of infections. Excessive drinking can also cause liver cirrhosis which is a common killer health condition among alcoholics. Gout disease is also frequently found in people who take too much beer and red meat. Since judgment is usually impaired when one is drunk, poor decision-making can lead to risky sexual behavior and thus sexually transmitted diseases and infections.
3. **Addiction:** Alcohol addiction is also termed as alcohol dependence. An alcoholic cannot function before indulging in alcohol or getting some liquor in the body system. You'll always see the hands shaking, or they become easily irritable. Alcoholics are so used to the false reality created by the state of being high that they do not know how to operate in a sober state. It is a negative impact of addiction that affects alcoholics as well as those addicted to drugs and other substances.
4. **Abuse:** Alcoholism leads to alcohol abuse. A person with a compulsive drinking habit will keep on drinking even when he or she is inebriated. To such people, there is never a point when alcohol becomes too much. Alcohol abuse can lead to alcohol poisoning when there is too much liquor in the body system.
5. **Wastage of money:** Alcoholics will prioritize drinking over other important life decisions. An alcoholic can spend a lot of money on liquor at the expense of feeding the family or making serious investment decisions. The need to get high and the desire to taste alcohol dents one financially because it is a habit that requires money for sustenance. Poor judgment when an individual is drunk can also lead to bad financial decisions. A person can buy an item that he or she does not need and thereby cause wastage of money.
6. **Relationship problems at home and issues at work:** Alcoholism can lead to relationship problems at home and result in issues at the workplace. An alcoholic spouse may become abusive to his or her partner. Such spouses may also not spend quality time with their better halves and may leave all the relationship's work to their partners. It leads to unhappiness in the relationship and may cause marital strife. An alcohol addict may also have problems interacting with friends and other family members due to the bad habits. Alcoholism also affects the professional life of a person. The office environment has no room for an employee reeking of

alcohol or coming to work drunk. Alcohol addiction can lead to disorganization in the office, poor quality of work output, and bad decision-making skills.

7. **Low self-esteem:** Alcohol addiction can lead to low self-esteem. An addict may believe that he or she is not good enough because of the perceptions that the society has about people who abuse alcohol and other substances. It can lead to the inability to pursue dreams or take advantage of existing opportunities due to the low self-esteem.
8. **Unfulfilled career:** A person addicted to alcohol may never truly realize his or her potential career-wise. Alcoholism kills motivation and affects job performance leading to career stagnation. An alcoholic cannot be trusted with the management of an organization and may often be overlooked when promotion opportunities arise.

4. Solutions

Alcoholism is a disease that has a solution. These are some of the ways in which alcohol addiction can be treated or prevented:

1. **Discourage drinking:** Alcoholism can be prevented by discouraging drinking. The government and relevant stakeholders can carry out awareness campaigns to educate the society on the dangers of alcohol addiction. The campaign can be done on social media, print media, and television so that it can reach the target audience. Drinking while driving should also be prohibited. This can be made effective by having traffic checkpoints to arrest drivers who are intoxicated.
2. **Depression treatment centers:** Taking alcohol does not treat depression. If anything, it only makes it worse. Psychiatrist treatment and not alcohol is the solution for depression. Depression treatment centers would, therefore, serve as a good treatment mechanism for those suffering from depression. It would reduce the number of people seeking comfort in the bottle for their depressing thoughts. Many people in the society do not really understand that depression is a mental disorder. Having treatment centers and creating awareness would destigmatize it and get help to those in need.
3. **Detoxification:** People addicted to alcohol can get professional help and kick the bad habit. Rehabilitation centres are ideal places for detoxification. An addict will be accorded treatment and given the necessary support to overcome alcoholism. The body undergoes detoxification and is then tuned to function without alcohol in the system. Rehab is usually a good treatment option for those that are too far gone that even the intervention of friends and family members cannot get them to overcome the habit. An individual may be directed to attend a rehabilitation centre by a court of law, employer, or in other cases forcibly taken to the centres by concerned friends and relatives.
4. **Ban alcohol:** An alcohol ban can also play an important role in combating alcoholism. Limiting drinking hours in bars and other social places may

discourage public drinking. The government can enact legislation to ensure that this is legally enforceable and to act as a deterrent to those that might want to flout the directive.

5. **Peer counselling:** Peer guidance and counselling can help the youth avoid the negative influence of peer pressure and place them on the right paths to academic excellence and career progression. It can be used to guide youths properly and help them overcome issues such as low self-esteem that may lead to depression and hence alcohol abuse. Peer counselling centres can be set up in schools, campuses, places of worship, and places of work so that the young people can get help and keep away from negative behavior. Community peer counselling

centres are also ideal places to seek guidance and find help.

5. Conclusion

Alcoholism is a disease (chronic illness) with many negative impacts. People who are addicted to alcohol abuse it and take it without any moderation. The health implications of alcohol abuse are numerous and may prove fatal if left untreated. A variety of factors such as mental stress, issues at work, marital strife, hopelessness, and depression may push one into alcoholism. Alcohol does not solve any of the problems. It is thus better to find a solution to the existing problems instead of turning to alcohol to find solace. The society should recognize that alcohol addiction is a disease that should be treated accordingly. Addicts should be given the necessary support and helped to overcome their addiction problems

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