

The Harmful Effects of Alcohol

On the Brain



Steady drinking over many years leads to permanent changes in the brain. One of the permanent effects of alcohol on the brain is to reduce the amount of brain tissue and to increase the size of the ventricles instead. Another way in which alcoholic drinks affect the brain is through depriving it of food substances such as vitamins. This occurs because the small intestines less efficient at nutrient absorption. In addition, heavy drinkers often neglect their diet, which can lead to vitamin deficiencies. Thiamine, one of the 'B' vitamins is most commonly missing from the diet and can lead to serious mental disturbance.

Brain and Central Nervous System

Consuming alcoholic beverages can result in impaired behavior, judgment, memory, concentration and coordination.

Drinkers experience mild euphoria and loss of inhibition as alcohol impairs regions of the brain controlling behavior and emotion. Alcohol impairs judgment, memory, concentration and coordination; as well as inducing extreme mood swings and emotional outbursts.

Brain Damage and Effect

Alcohol acts as a sedative on the Central Nervous System, depressing the nerve cells in the brain - - dulling, altering and damaging their ability to respond. Large doses of alcohol can cause sleep, anesthesia, respiratory failure, coma and death.

Brain Disorders and Addiction

Long term drinking may result in permanent brain damage, serious mental disorders and addiction to alcohol.

Other effects on the central nervous system

- Impaired visual ability
- Altered sense of time and space
- Impaired fine motor skills
- Loss of pain perception
- Unclear hearing
- Slows reactions
- Dulled smell and taste
- Impaired sexual performance



EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL

REFERENCES:

Alcohol's Damaging Effects on the Brain, Alcohol Alert #63, Oct. 2004. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

Drinksense website –

http://drinksense.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4&Itemid=5

National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism website

<http://science.education.nih.gov/supplements/nih3/alcohol/guide/info-alcohol.htm>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services A website

<http://www.toosmartostart.samhsa.gov/tweens/games/InteractiveBody/index.aspx>