



Alcohol

DESCRIPTION	There are basically three types of alcoholic drinks: beers, wines and liquor. Alcohol is the most frequently used of all the substances.
MODE OF ADMINISTRATION	Alcohol is ingested orally by drinking it.
PRIMARY EFFECT	Central nervous system depressant.
SHORT-TERM EFFECTS	Alcohol affects the central nervous system directly. Once absorbed, it usually has the following effects: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impairs concentration and judgment;• Reduces inhibitions and co-ordination;• Increases blood pressure and heart rate;• Decreases blood supply to the heart;• Dilates blood vessels in the limbs, causing body heat to escape;• Small doses can cause mild feelings of well-being;• Large doses can progressively depress mood and energy;• Large doses can cause nausea, headaches, and vomiting;• Large doses can cause a stupor, loss of control over critical bodily functions, intentional and non-intentional injury, coma or death.
LONG-TERM EFFECTS	Alcohol is toxic to the body. Long-term alcohol abuse is life shortening and life threatening: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Withdrawal (including tremors, seizures and hallucinations);• Gastrointestinal disorders (including duodenal ulcers, reflux and diarrhea);• Damage to the pancreas and kidneys;• Liver disease (including alcoholic fatty liver, hepatitis and cirrhosis);• Malnutrition and muscle wasting (including suppression of the immune system);• Neurological damage (including memory defects, hallucinations, blackouts and seizures);• Hormonal disorders (including impotence and infertility);• Psychiatric complications (including anxiety and depression);• Heart disease (including risk of heart failure and stroke);• Respiratory damage (including respiratory depression and failure, pneumonia, tuberculosis and lung abscesses);• Cancer (including mouth and throat);• Risk of injury.
ADDICTION POTENTIAL	High psychological and physical addiction potential.
TREATMENT OPTIONS	Three general steps are involved in treating alcohol dependency – intervention (confronting denial), detoxification (management of possible withdrawal syndromes and ensuring rest, adequate nutrition and multiple vitamins), and rehabilitation (maintain abstinence and prevent a relapse). Treatment for alcohol dependence can occur in an inpatient and/or outpatient setting.