

Alcohol Induced Dementia: Can Alcohol Cause Dementia?



When most people think about dementia, Alzheimer's usually comes to mind, but there are other causes of the disease that you should be aware of. One such cause is called alcohol induced dementia.

What Is Alcoholic Dementia?

Unlike other types of dementia, alcoholic dementia is caused by damage to the brain due to drinking. This can be called alcohol-related brain damage or Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome.

The amount of alcohol one drinks during their lifetime will determine the effect it has later in life on their brain functioning. For example, if a person drinks 5 beers or more at a time or a bottle of wine regularly during their thirties and forties, they are 3 times more likely to have dementia caused by alcohol when they hit age 65 than someone who doesn't drink. One of the reasons for this is that alcohol kills brain cells faster than age by itself. For this reason, alcohol and dementia can go together.

So, if you've been wondering can alcohol cause dementia, the answer is yes it can, depending on the amount of alcohol a person drinks over their lifetime.

Alcoholic Dementia Symptoms

When it comes to the symptoms you may see when dementia is caused by alcohol, they can vary depending on which areas of the brain have been damaged by drinking. In general, however, you can expect to see some or all of the following symptoms, especially when alcoholism and dementia go hand-in-hand.

- Poor attention span
- Appearing insensitive to another's feelings
- Issues with making decisions
- Inappropriate behavior
- Reduced reasoning skills
- Reduced organizational skills
- Some memory loss

It's important to note that not all individuals with dementia caused by alcohol will lose their short-term memory.

Alcoholic Dementia Stages

The most common type of alcoholic dementia is called [Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome](#). This type of alcoholic dementia has the symptoms above but can also include more confusion, additional memory loss, communication issues, and trouble learning and retaining new information as well as hallucinations.

There are two distinct stages related to this type of dementia. The first stage, known as Wernicke encephalopathy, is what is called the acute stage, and Korsakoff syndrome is the chronic, long-lasting stage.

Wernicke encephalopathy happens when the brain has a severe reaction to the lack of thiamine. This can be life-threatening, and you may see signs of stumbling, staggering, and involuntary eye movements. Not all individuals will have Wernicke encephalopathy before they develop Korsakoff syndrome.

Treatment for Alcoholic Dementia

For those with alcoholic dementia, there is hope. One course of treatment is to take thiamine pills as well as other vitamins to help offset the loss of these vitamins due to drinking. This should be done under the supervision of a doctor.

In addition, injectable thiamine is also an option for heavy drinkers who are experiencing symptoms. Finally, refraining from all alcohol is also recommended.

So, when it comes to the question "Does alcohol cause dementia?," the answer is yes, but the good news is that with treatment and giving up drinking, the patient can see improvement in their symptoms with approximately 25% of patients fully recovering and another 50% seeing some improvement.