

ALCOHOL ABUSE

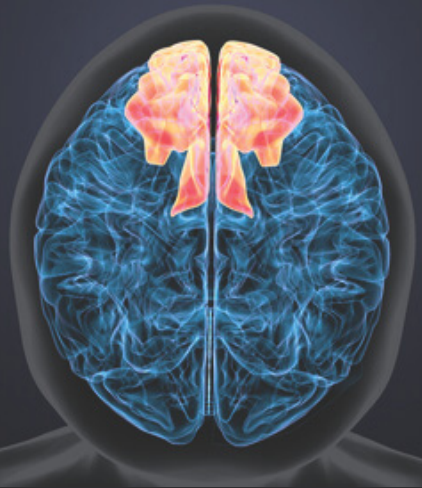
Say **NO** to alcohol addiction

Alcoholism develops when people become so dependent on alcohol that they become addicted to its effects. Alcohol helps people escape the realities of everyday stress by giving them a feeling of relaxation. However, these feelings are only temporary, which results in people using more and more alcohol. As the alcohol consumption increases, there are other side effects, such as a negative self-image and self-loathing. These negative feelings usually degenerate into serious depression and even suicidal thoughts.

Alcohol abuse has devastating effects on a person's body (physically), psychologically (emotional), socially (relationships with family, work and society) and spiritually.

Effects on the brain

- Irreversible loss of brain tissue and memory (especially short term memory)
- Hallucinations
- Delusions
- Confusion
- Disturbed and irrational behaviour
- Fainting



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Psychological effects

The mind is effected to such an extent that people experience:

- Restlessness and anxiety
- Irritability
- Tremors
- Memory impairment
- Disorientation regarding time and place
- Hallucinations and delusions
- Profuse sweating
- Pregnant women who drink excessively can develop foetal alcohol syndrome, causing the unborn baby to be mentally impaired.

Physiological effects

- Malnutrition
- Weight increase initially, then weightloss
- Long-term use - swollen and coarse complexion, bloodshot eyes
- High blood pressure
- An enlarged, weak heart
- Stomach ulcers
- Diarrhoea
- Inflammation of the liver, which swells up and eventually shrinks to become a small, hard, non-functional organ (cirrhosis).

Factors that can lead to alcoholism

- Lack of communication skills
- Lack of problem solving
- Poor anger management
- Low self-image
- Lack of support system
- Lack of recreational activities

If you require professional help to fight alcoholism, please contact Platinum Health's Mental Health Services (MHS) on 014 590 1700. Therapists are also available at most Platinum Health facilities and no referral or authorisation number is required to access the service.

MHS offers a completely confidential service to help people improve their quality of life.