

What Makes Alcohol Addictive?

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Alcohol is today's most used addictive substance in the United States. Consequently, around 14 million people (about 8% of all adults) are struggling with alcohol dependence. Millions more have habits of frequent binge drinking, which is unhealthy and can lead to addiction and the need for [alcoholism treatment](#). But why is alcohol addictive? What is in alcohol that makes it addictive, and how does it work to cause dependency in victims of the disease?



Having someone close to you exhibiting alcoholism signs can be a helpless feeling. Figuring out how to get the person to agree to rehab can seem too complicated to accomplish. The reality is that there are many different underlying reasons why people drink.

So, there is no simple answer or one-size-fits-all solution. Treatment that works well for one person doesn't necessarily help someone else, even though the symptoms may differ. What is common among alcoholics is both physical and psychological factors in addiction that must be addressed for treatment to be effective.

Physical Factors in Alcoholism

Drinking alcohol triggers the release of natural chemicals in the brain that deliver painkilling benefits and generate feelings of pleasure. Research indicates that there are genetic components involved in how the brains of different people react to alcohol. For a key example, in the brains of some individuals, a greater quantity of pleasure-generating chemicals was released by the introduction of alcohol. That reaction makes those people more vulnerable to physical dependency.

Alcohol consumption can cause physical changes in the brain's chemistry and functioning. This is what makes alcohol so addictive. The pleasure and reward areas of the brain are overwhelmed, and the user naturally craves repetition of those experiences of enhanced pleasure.

Psychological Factors in Alcoholism

Stress often leads to using alcohol as a temporary, albeit unhealthy, means of relief from psychological discomfort from stressful situations. This approach to stress relief becomes a habit that can seem too hard to break until eventually coping with the alcohol habit becomes a new and even bigger cause of stress-inducing complications.

Like other substance use disorders, alcohol addiction starts with behaviors that ultimately become habitual. Along the way, individuals' beliefs and thinking contribute to perpetuating alcohol abuse and its impact on their future. For instance, many alcoholics believe they can quit drinking anytime they want to do so. So, they're not likely to seek treatment, and they are likely to reject it, perhaps strenuously, if faced with it as a requirement or even a suggestion.

Withdrawal Deterrent to Sobriety

Many people who have attempted to stop drinking abruptly after long periods of routine heavy alcohol use find themselves unexpectedly undergoing detoxification. That process can manifest a range of unbearable physical and psychological symptoms, including these, among others:

- Headache
- Nausea
- Insomnia
- Tremors (hands shaking)
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Seizures

Physically and mentally, going through alcohol withdrawal can be an excruciating experience that can even be fatal in some cases. For many people who undergo the process, the body and brain also crave alcohol intensely.

So, it's not surprising that fear of withdrawal and the sense of need to avoid it causes many alcoholics to continue drinking. They accept the burden of sustaining the disease rather than willingly subject themselves to suffering through withdrawal.

Alcohol Addiction Treatment

Even if a person intends to quit drinking, one effect of alcohol is its hazardous impact on decision-making ability and impulse control. This makes quitting or controlling alcohol abuse much less likely and relapses more likely for those who do stop drinking. Methodically managing cravings is an essential component of addiction treatment.

But, for lasting alcohol addiction recovery, treatment must focus on resolving the underlying issue(s) that bring people to substance abuse and ultimately to addiction. Therapy must not be limited to stopping alcohol use.

For a primary example, Renaissance therapists work with our clients on overcoming the common sense of emotional pain, shame, and isolation that so many people suffer. We help each person do the work to advance to a happier and more meaningful life beyond addiction.

Best Alcoholism Treatment in Arizona

Renaissance alcohol addiction treatment options include our Partial Hospitalization, Outpatient, and Aftercare programs. Our therapists are highly experienced in treating alcohol use disorder and the mental health issues that often accompany substance abuse and addiction. We work closely with each client to create a personalized recovery plan.

We can accept most health insurance, and we can confirm the coverage of your treatment program with your insurance provider for you.

If you or a loved one are struggling with alcohol addiction, please call us at Renaissance Recovery Center at (480) 526-7738, or contact us online for help 24/7.
