

Alcohol dependence



Alcohol dependence is a progressive disease that is caused and influenced by genetic, psychosocial and environmental factors. Obtaining and consuming alcohol can develop into a life-defining activity. With an appropriate treatment approach, the prognosis for alcohol dependence is significantly better than is widely believed. People with addictions who have achieved abstinence usually have a good quality of life and are able to live completely normally.



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CAGE test

Individuals can use the CAGE test to assess their own relationship with alcohol.

1. Have you ever felt you should cut down on your drinking?
2. Have you ever been annoyed when people have commented on your drinking?
3. Have you ever felt guilty or bad about your drinking?
4. Have you ever felt you needed a drink (an Eye opener) first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover?

One or more "yes" responses may indicate an alcohol addiction.

Characteristics

- Tolerate more alcohol or need more than previously
- Withdrawal symptoms, which disappear when drinking
- Constant inner urge or desire to drink
- Loss of control, drinking more than really wanted
- Neglect of important areas of life due to drinking
- Drinking despite damage to health from alcohol

Causes

Although the biological basis of addictions has been recognised more clearly in recent years, alcohol dependence is usually attributed to a mere lack of willpower in those affected. The medical and scientific point of view explains alcohol dependence in terms of a biopsychosocial model. This explains the overall risk of developing an addiction as arising from the interplay of biological risk factors with psychological and social factors.

Treatment

Treatment for alcohol dependence is a therapeutic process consisting of contact, motivation, detoxification, withdrawal and follow-up stages. With alcohol dependence syndrome, detoxification is usually carried out on an inpatient basis because of possible secondary conditions or risks to health.

The Privatklinik Meiringen offers physical detoxification accompanied by expert withdrawal treatment. The aim is to use psychotherapeutic measures to support the patient in developing insight into their own illness and to motivate him or her for further treatment. Alcohol dependence syndrome is treated in conjunction with associated mental, physical and social problems. Secondary or concomitant disorders are also included in the treatment.

At the Privatklinik Meiringen, an interdisciplinary team develops an individual treatment plan for each patient. It is important to find out what factors contribute to the individual's return to alcohol use and how relapse can be prevented. A particular focus of the treatment is personally tailored psychotherapy with individual and group therapy. Modern biological therapies are also used. Patients learn to better cope with difficulties and to find ways of developing meaningful, healthy and relaxing leisure activities. Continued outpatient therapy is also offered, as well as liaising with other psychiatric facilities and services. Depending on the overall clinical picture, subsequent withdrawal therapy in another specialist addiction facility may be possible.

Living with an addiction

Addictive disorders are diseases in the medical sense and have similarities with other chronic diseases. The disease will not go away, but treatment can favourably influence its course. Although the risk of relapse will continue for life, through the interplay of medical advice and active efforts it is possible to achieve abstinence or at least alleviation of the problem. We offer appropriate advice and treatment as part of our multidisciplinary team approach.

Prevention strategies

Early detection is helpful (often by family members), as is the involvement of professionals, such as through our outpatient services.