

Introduction

Alcohol Related Brain Damage (ARBD) is the term used to describe the range of symptoms that can occur as a result of alcohol misuse. Alcohol can affect the body's ability to get and store nutrients such as thiamine. Thiamine is a B vitamin and is important for the healthy functioning of the brain. Excessive intake of alcohol can therefore cause short and long term memory problems.

ARBD is also sometimes described as Korsokoff's Syndrome or Wernicke's Syndrome. More and more people are being diagnosed with ARBD and it can affect people of any age.

Recovery

ARBD is sometimes described as a form of dementia but it is important to realise that 25% of people with ARBD make a full recovery and 75% make some recovery. (Smith and Hillman 1999.)

Signs

- Difficulty remembering recent events
- Making up stories related to recent events
- Trouble remembering where things are
- Poor concentration
- Feeling irritated or short-tempered
- Pins and needles/numbness in arms and legs
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty making choices

How to Help Yourself

- Stopping drinking alcohol will stop ARBD getting worse and is critical to recovery
- Eat healthy foods
- Talk to your Doctor about vitamin supplements
- Ask for professional help
- Use notes, diaries, photo galleries and checklists to help you remember

How to Help Someone Who has ARBD

- Support the person to stop or cut down alcohol intake
- Try and help the person to eat a good, healthy diet
- Try to ensure the person has talked to their Doctor about Thiamine or other treatments
- Get professional help if available
- Be hopeful and positive about the person's recovery
- Be patient
- Give information in short clear statements
- Keen decisions/choices clear and simple
- Use notes, diaries, photo galleries and checklists to help person remember

Useful Contacts

Drinkline: 0800 917 8282

Freephone Helpline for:

- People worried about their own drinking
- Family and friends of someone who is drinking
- Information and self-help materials
- Advice on where to go for help

www.patient.co.uk/support/drinkline

Alcohol & Drugs Action Team (ADAT)

Each area in Scotland has an alcohol and drugs action team. Contact information will be available from your GP practice.

Alcoholics Anonymous

Helpline and support organisation for people concerned about their drinking
0845 769 7555 (local rate phone number)

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Useful Reading

“A Fuller Life” - Report of the expert group on Alcohol Related Brain Damage, University of Stirling 2004.



Penumbra is a leading Scottish voluntary organisation working in the field of mental health. We provide an extensive range of person-centred support services for adults and young people.

We also campaign to raise awareness of mental health issues and reduce the social stigma attached to them.

If you would like more information or have any further questions about any other Penumbra services please contact:

Penumbra, Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh, EH7 5QY

T 0131 475 2380 | F 0131 475 2391

E enquiries@penumbra.org.uk

www.penumbra.org.uk

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