

# How Does Alcoholism Physically Affect People?

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## Alcoholism and the Nervous System

Chronic drinking can affect the the brain and nervous system with physical symptoms that can also lead to psychological problems. After consuming one drink, alcohol begins to impede nerve impulses that can lead to vertigo, blindness, muscular tremors and numbness in the extremities. With extended use, alcohol can lead to "delirium tremors," mental confusion, anxiety and hallucinations. During withdrawal from alcohol, the alcoholic can experience, anxiety, trembling, rapid pulse and many other physical symptoms that are related to the nervous symptom.

## Cirrhosis of the Liver

One of the most common side effects of alcoholism is cirrhosis of the liver. In cirrhosis, the body uses the sugar in alcohol as the body's primary fuel source instead of blood glucose. Toxic chemicals in alcohol inflame the liver tissue, eventually causing destruction. When liver tissue is destroyed, it cannot process the fatty acids in fat, and the acids begin to accumulate, contributing to liver failure.

## Infection and Inflammation

High levels of alcohol in the body contribute to "gastritis" and inflammation of the stomach and digestive tract. If left unchecked, alcohol can interfere with the intestines' processing and absorption of food, resulting in malnutrition. Eventually, alcohol can lead to vitamin B1 deficiency, Wernicke's Disease and Korsakoff's Syndrome.

## Other Alcohol-Related Problems

Alcoholism can also lead to a number of other physical problems, such as cardiovascular disease, impaired sexual performance and cancer. Alcoholics often experience high blood pressure that can lead to congestive heart failure, heart attack and stroke. Alcoholism is also linked to erectile dysfunction in men and cancer of the colon, liver, esophagus and throat.

## Resources

- [The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence](#)