

Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome (AWS): The Severity of Alcohol Dependence

Anil Pavitra Jain *

Department of Psychiatry, Yenepoya University, Mangalore, Karnataka, India

DESCRIPTION

Alcohol is a widely consumed substance in the world, and it is often used as a form of relaxation and socializing. However, excessive and prolonged consumption of alcohol can lead to dependence, addiction, and serious health complications, including Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome (AWS). AWS is a set of symptoms that occur when a heavy drinker abruptly stops or reduces their alcohol consumption.

Symptoms

AWS symptoms can range from mild to severe, depending on the severity of alcohol dependence and the duration of alcohol consumption. Symptoms usually begin within 6 to 24 hours after the last drink and can last for several days. Some of the common symptoms of AWS include;

- Tremors; Shaking hands, arms or legs.
- Nausea and vomiting; Feeling sick and vomiting.
- Anxiety; Feeling restless, irritable and nervous.
- Insomnia; Difficulty in sleeping or staying asleep.
- Seizures; Sudden, uncontrollable movements of the body.
- Delirium Tremens (DTs); A severe form of AWS, including confusion, hallucinations, and fever.

DT's is a rare but life-threatening condition that occurs in approximately 5% of AWS cases. It usually occurs between 48 to 72 hours after the last drink and requires immediate medical attention.

Treatment

The treatment of AWS usually depends on the severity of symptoms. Mild symptoms can be treated at home or in an outpatient setting, while severe symptoms require hospitalization. Treatment options for AWS include;

Benzodiazepines: A type of medication that helps to reduce anxiety, seizures, and other symptoms of AWS. Examples include Diazepam, Lorazepam, and Chlordiazepoxide.

Antipsychotics: A medication that helps to reduce agitation and delirium in severe cases of AWS. Examples include Haloperidol and Chlorpromazine.

Vitamins and fluids: Alcoholism can cause nutritional deficiencies, and administering vitamins and fluids can help to restore balance.

Counseling and therapy: Counseling and therapy can help to address the underlying cause of alcohol dependence and provide support during the recovery process.

Hospitalization: Severe cases of AWS may require hospitalization to manage symptoms, prevent complications, and provide round-the-clock medical care.

Prevention

AWS can be prevented by taking the following steps;

Gradually reducing alcohol consumption: Heavy drinkers should gradually reduce their alcohol consumption to avoid sudden cessation.

Seeking medical help: Heavy drinkers should seek medical help before attempting to quit alcohol to ensure a safe and smooth withdrawal process.

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle: A healthy lifestyle that includes a balanced diet, regular exercise, and stress management can reduce the risk of developing alcohol dependence and AWS.

CONCLUSION

Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome (AWS) is a serious condition that can occur in heavy drinkers who abruptly stop or reduce their alcohol consumption. However, excessive and prolonged consumption of alcohol can lead to dependence, addiction, and serious health complications. Symptoms can range from mild to severe and can last for several days. Treatment options for AWS depend on the severity of symptoms and may include medications, vitamins, fluids, counseling, therapy, and hospitalization in severe cases. AWS can be prevented by gradually reducing alcohol consumption, seeking medical help, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. It is essential to recognize the

Correspondence to: Anil Pavitra Jain, Department of Psychiatry, Yenepoya University, Mangalore, Karnataka, India, E-mail: anilpavitrajain@gmail.com

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signs and symptoms of AWS and seek medical attention immediately to prevent complications and ensure a safe recovery process. Overall, alcohol consumption should be consumed in

moderation, and excessive drinking should be avoided to prevent the risk of developing alcohol dependence and AWS.