

MOA of Alcohol

- Multiple; Not well understood
 - GABA receptor agonist
 - NMDA (*glutamate*) receptor antagonist
 - Believed to have either a direct or indirect effect on the mu-opioid receptor (*associated with alcohol cravings and euphoria; reward pathway*)
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- *GABA is an inhibitor NT*
 - *Glutamate is an excitatory NT*

Alcohol | Signs and Symptoms of Intoxication

Slurred speech

Loss of coordination

Unsteady gait (staggering)

Nystagmus (rapid, involuntary eye movement)

Impaired memory or attention

Stupor or coma

Can be mistaken for sedative intoxication ⇒ If the patient is conscious, ask them what they took

Signs & Symptoms of Alcohol Withdrawal

Sweating or HR > 100 BPM

↑ hand tremor

Insomnia

Nausea ± Vomiting

Transient visual, tactile, or auditory hallucinations

Psychomotor agitation

Anxiety

Tonic-Clonic Seizures

Tonic-Clonic Seizure: a seizure that involves a loss of consciousness and violent muscle contractions

PK of Alcohol

Absorption Small intestine

Delayed gastric emptying and/or presence of food delays absorption

Metabolism Zero-Order

Metabolized by alcohol dehydrogenase

Elimination Mostly into CO₂ and water

Treatment of Alcohol Intoxication

ED visit, hospitalization, ICU admissions

Supportive care based on symptoms and BAC

ABC's [Airway, Breathing, Circulation]

Manage nausea and vomiting

Prevent aspiration

Replace fluids (ie banana bags)

Banana bags: Thiamine 100 mg, Folic Acid 1 mg, Multivitamin, ± magnesium

Clinical Presentation of Alcohol Withdrawal

6 to 12 hours Minor Withdrawal

12 to 24 hours Alcohol Hallucinosi

24 to 48 hours Withdrawal Seizures

72 to 96 hours Delirium Tremens (DT)

- *Onset is measured based on the time of the patient's last drink*
- *Could be sooner in more severe cases*



Alcohol Withdrawal Presentations Defined

Minor Withdrawal Peaks at 24 to 36 hours

May last up to 5 days

Presence of 2 to 3 symptoms of withdrawal

Tremors, anxiety, headache, diaphoresis, palpitations, nausea

Severe Withdrawal Presence of ≥ 6 symptoms

Alcoholic hallucinosis (visual is most common; auditory or tactile); generally resolves within 48 hours

Seizures (generalized, tonic-clonic; can happen within hours of last drink)

Delirium Tremens (DTs) Delirium, Disorientation, agitation, mydriasis, tachycardia, HTN, Temp $> 104F$, diaphoresis

Onset: 2 to 5 days after last drink

Prevalence: 3 to 5% of pt's with untreated alcohol withdrawal

Mortality rate: 5 to 15%

Risk Factors of Withdrawal

- Environmental: increased frequency of quantity of consumption, prior withdrawals, concomitant sedative, hypnotic, or anxiolytic drugs
- Genetic: family history of withdrawal

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Page 2 of 2.

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